PZ
3
.S364S

FT MEADE
GenColl

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

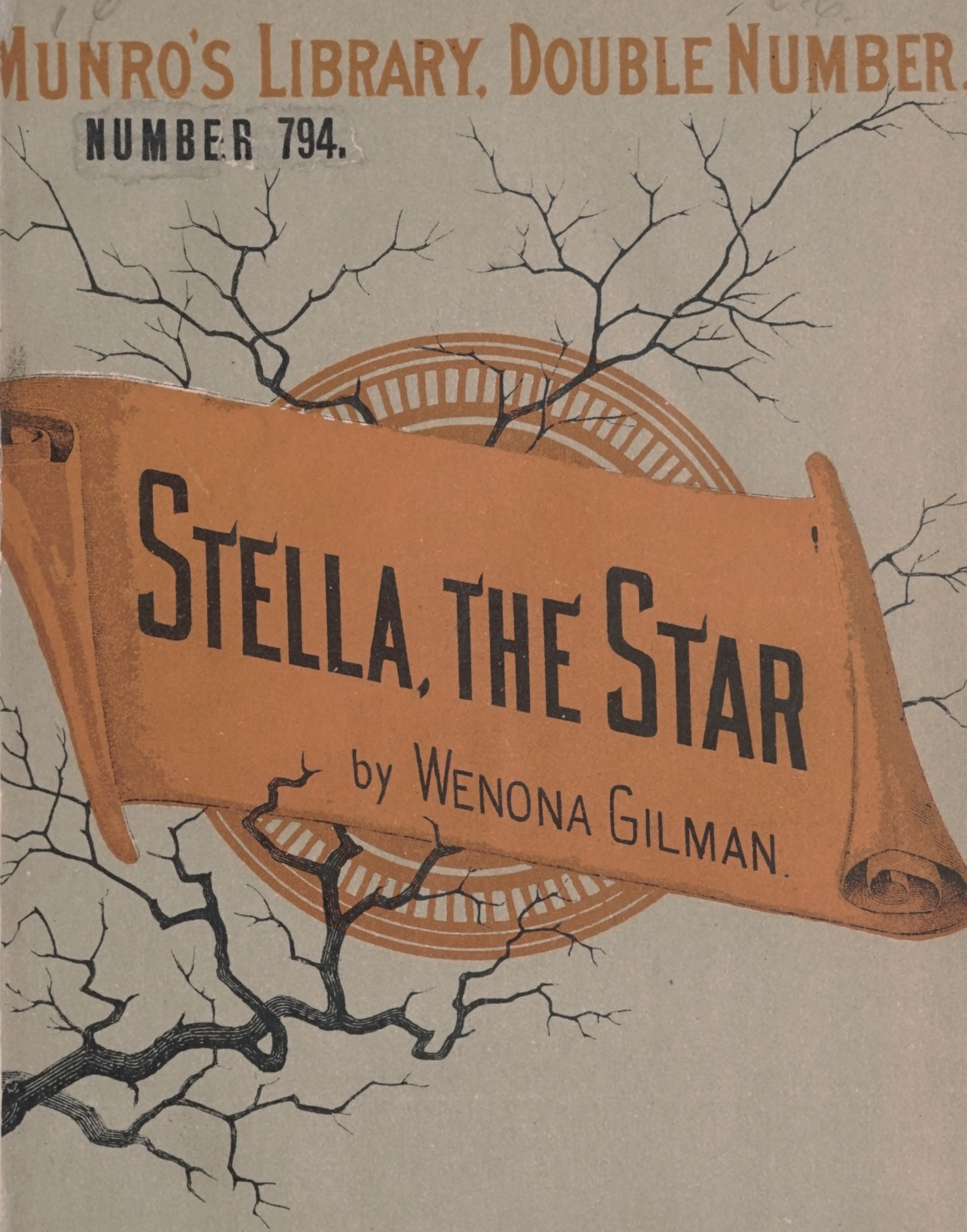
Chap. PZ3 Copyright No.

Shelf .D364S

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

MUNRO'S LIBRARY. DOUBLE NUMBER.

NUMBER 794.



STELLA, THE STAR

by WENONA GILMAN.

MUNRO'S PUBLISHING HOUSE

24 & 26 Vandewater St. New York.

MUNRO'S LIBRARY

VOL. 50. NO. 794. OCTOBER 31, 1887. SUBSCRIPTION $30.

Entered at the Post Office, N. Y., as Second Class Matter.
Munro's Library is issued Tri-Weekly.

STELLA, THE STAR;

OR,

A Drama off the Stage.

THE ROMANCE OF AN ACTRESS' PRIVATE LIFE.

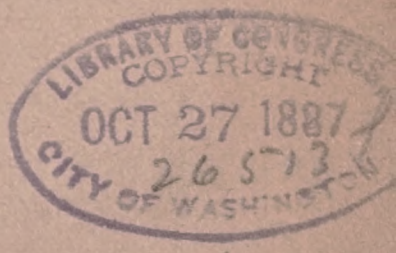
40

BY WENONA GILMAN.

7 Schoeffel,

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1887, by Norman L. Munro, in the office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington, D. C.





NEW YORK:
NORMAN L. MUNRO, PUBLISHER,
24 AND 26 VANDEWATER ST.

WHY ARE
THE MADAME MORA'S CORSETS

PZ3
.S364S



A MARVEL OF COMFORT AND ELEGANCE!

Try them, and you will Find

WHY they **need no breaking in,** but feel easy at once.

WHY they are liked by Ladies of **full figure.**

WHY they do **not break down over the hips,** and

WHY the celebrated **French curved band** prevents any wrinkling or stretching at the sides.

WHY dressmakers delight in fitting dresses over them.

WHY merchants say they give better satisfaction than any others.

WHY they take pains to recommend them.

Their popularity has induced many imitations, which are frauds, high at any price. Buy only the genuine, stamped **Madame Mora's.** Sold by all leading Dealers with this

GUARANTEE:

that if not perfectly satisfactory upon trial the money will be refunded.

L. KRAUS & CO., Manufacturers, Birmingham, Conn.

STELLA, THE STAR;

OR,

A Drama off the Stage.

THE ROMANCE OF AN ACTRESS' PRIVATE LIFE.

BY WENONA GILMAN.

CHAPTER I.

"GET me one box of rouge de theatre, number eighteen—be sure to get eighteen, for any other number is not the right shade—one box of the lightest shade of brunette exora powder and a stick of Condray's Pomade. And tell Charlie Myers to dress that wig high, instead of low, as I told him yesterday. Go quickly, Clochette, and don't stay, as I can do nothing until you return."

The girl left the room, and the speaker opened a little enameled watch and looked at it.

"There! fortunately I made a mistake, and am very early. Full half an hour before time to dress. Clochette is so frightfully slow, that my error has favored me for once."

She removed her long sealskin wrap and the rich, dark street dress which it concealed. She selected a pretty, simple, loose wrapper of delicate blue and white to replace it, and then sat down in front of a long mirror and began studying her own face.

It was well worth it.

Her mirror reflected a small, well-shaped head covered with soft, clustering curls of bronze gold. It was wonderful hair, silky and soft as a child's; a smooth, creamy, clear complexion, which almost glittered in its dazzling

loveliness. Her eyes were like dark, velvety pansies, and shone with the tender light of the heart's-ease before the summer sun has dried the dew from its petals. They had a trick of growing black when any emotion swayed her, and she had a face from the broad white brow, through the beautiful eyes, the delicate, Grecian nose, the exquisitely curved, sweet, tremulous mouth, to the rounded, perfect chin, that betrayed every feeling of her pure soul.

Her slender, sylph-like form was only comparable, in its gliding, swaying grace, to the movements of some great shining serpent, though there was nothing which indicated a snake in the girl's gentle, tender, loving disposition, which had powers and capabilities of which she yet did not dream.

Stella Northcote was a girl whom contact with the world could not defile. She knew the world, she understood men, she could sway them like a reed in the wind, and yet she was essentially as pure and simple-minded as a country lass. She was a woman of the world, yet thoroughly apart from its vices, its uncharitableness, its slanders, its jealousies, and its corruptions.

Born of theatrical parents, she herself had been a member of that much maligned profession from the time she could first remember, loving it with all the depth of her great soul, studying her characters with interest and affection, rather than from any desire to win applause.

But that came, came in showers like rain from a summer sky, only the applause lasted, whereas the summer storm passes, leaving the sky serenely blue and the rain is soon forgotten.

As she sat before her mirror, in the dressing-room at the theater, she threw herself back in her chair, stretched her lovely arms above her head, and nodded approvingly at herself.

"What a lucky girl you are, Stella Northcote," she said aloud in the soft, silvery voice which suited her so well. "First of all, an excellent salary with a percentage of the gross, next a fair amount of talent, or 'genius,' as the critics choose to call my attempts, an unlimited amount of ability in the art of dressing well, and last—ah, well! I am not sure of that yet."

A little, tender smile played about her mouth, and almost at the same instant a knock sounded upon her door.

It was the call-boy.

"A box of cut flowers for you, Miss Northcote," he announced, in a business-like tone. "I knocked against a wing and dropped the box. The top came off, but the flowers are unhurt. By the way! I almost forgot. There is a gentleman at the door and wishes to know if you will see him for a moment."

"Who is it?"

"I don't know," answered the boy, looking at the ceiling with a steady stare.

"Bring him down."

The boy departed and soon returned with an elegantly-dressed, stylish gentleman, of a tall, Apollo-like appearance. He was dark and handsome as men rarely are, with a quiet, lazy grace, all his own.

"Is it you, Mr. Pendennis?" asked Stella, rising and extending her hand, while a slight pink colored her cheeks for a moment. "You know it is against the manager's rules for gentlemen to call at the theater."

"I am not 'gentlemen.' Don't pluralize me, please," answered Pendennis, seating himself lazily in the chair she had vacated, while he drew up another for her. "Besides, you know that no one ever objects to anything that you desire."

"But I do not desire your presence here," said Stella, with a half smile.

"Yes, you do. Your eyes betray you. You are the best actress I ever saw on the stage, Stella, but the worst one in private life. Your eyes are altogether too honest and truthful. Do you know what they say now, just as plainly as if your lips spoke?"

"Yes; they say, 'Mr. Pendennis, I can give you just five minutes. State your business and take your departure.'"

She laughed merrily, which took from her words any ungraciousness which they otherwise might have conveyed.

"You are utterly mistaken. They say, 'I am glad you have come, Philip, and I want you to remain, but, of course, you can't, very long.'"

He leaned back in his chair, half closed his eyes, and looked at her.

She smiled saucily.

"Egotist! I should be dressing now, but I had to send Clochette for some 'make-up,' which I have been neglecting and forgetting."

"Why do you make up your face, with your complexion? You are not so beautiful on the stage, to me, as you are off, and it is that odious make-up."

"Nonsense! I should look sallow and ghastly with that strong light and no make-up, no matter how perfect my complexion might be."

"I wish you would leave the stage, Stella."

She looked at him aghast.

"Leave the stage!" she repeated. "Don't be absurd, Mr. Pendennis. How could I leave it? What would I do without my art, my long-loved study, my excitement, and my dear, dear public? And what would they do without me?"

"Don't trouble about them. They would soon find some new divinity to worship, and as for yourself, well, you might select some other object to study and love—me, for instance."

He spoke quite coolly, and slowly, watching her closely through his still half-closed eyes.

"Pooh!" she answered, unconcernedly, while a vivid blush struggled into her cheeks. "You are more stupid than usual to-night."

"Am I?" he asked, softly. "Then my stupidity must be colossal. How blindingly beautiful you are when you blush, Stella."

"I am not blushing"—her face taking on a little deeper shade.

"Aren't you? I really must visit an oculist; I am having optical illusions."

"Stel," spoke a rich masculine voice through the half-open door, "will you run through the lines of the second act with me? I am horribly shaky in them."

"After the first act, Ted. I'm engaged now," she called back.

"All right. Ta-ta."

"Why are you so familiar with that fellow, and he

with you?" asked Pendennis, some scintillating sparks gathering in his lazy, handsome eyes.

"Oh, we are like a big family of brothers and sisters here. We don't mind each other. I don't object to their calling me 'Stel,' but when some one calls me 'Northcote' that makes me angry. It sounds disrespectful."

"Well, it makes *me* angry to see that fellow 'Ted,' as you call him, with his arms around you in the play, and to see you kiss him sets my blood on fire."

"Do you see that post? Yes, of course you do. Well, I might have my arms about it all day, and my brother, my father, or even my lover, if I had any of these, would utter no protest. I might kiss this dagger all day"—holding it in her hand—"and no word would be said against it. Well, Ted Earlscourt is like that post or this dagger to me, when we are on the stage together. He is simply a piece of furniture. If the business of the play calls for me to kiss the dagger, I do it. If it calls for me to kiss Ted, I kiss him. One second later I could not tell whether I had done it or not. Neither could he."

"Umph!" ejaculated Pendennis. "I see. But, all the same, when you are my wife you leave the stage."

"Whoever heard such impertinence?" exclaimed Stella, her color rising again. "Pray, who ever told you that I intend conferring that honor upon you?"

"Your eyes," answered Pendennis calmly. "They have said to me every moment since I have been in this room, 'Philip, I love you,' just as they have said it many times before."

"Then they are as arrant deceivers as were ever put in any one's head."

"Do you mean that you do not love me, Stella?"

He had leaned forward and taken her little, cool hands into his grasp, and was looking into her eyes. There was a world of slumbering passion in his own, and though he spoke quietly, she could see that there was intense excitement underlying his words.

She did not answer, and he took her tenderly in his arms and kissed her sweet lips.

There was a flush upon his face as he raised his head, and his voice was not quite steady when he spoke.

"You do love me, Stella, and will be my wife, because the world would be chaos and my life a purposeless chasm without you. I can imagine no future for myself in which you are not the central figure. I can think of no happiness which is not made by you. I love you with all my soul, and you know it. Is it not true, Stella?"

"I believe it, Philip, and it is my heart's joy to believe it."

He kissed her again tenderly and lingeringly.

"My darling!" he murmured, softly. "Say, 'Philip, I love you.' I have heard you say the words before, but not to me, and they were like the sting of scorpions to me. Now say them for me alone, and when you say them do it from the bottom of your great, pure soul, and let your eyes speak them also."

She raised her lovely eyes to his. There was no need to call it up. The divine light of imperishable love glittered there.

Her face was quite close to his, and she murmured so low that even he scarcely caught the words:

"Philip, I love you."

No man could doubt after that, even had he been inclined to, which Philip Pendennis was not.

"And I will be your wife," he dictated.

"Half hour!" sung out the call-boy, making his rounds.

At the same moment Clochette entered.

"Good gracious!" cried Stella, leaping to her feet. "Half hour and not a thing done. Go quickly, Mr. Pendennis, or I shall be late."

"Answer my question," he said, softly.

"To-morrow at four," she answered, with a dazzling smile. "Good-night!"

She closed the door after him, turned the key and began the process of making up, which she never allowed any one to do for her. How happy she was.

Poor Stella! As if she did not know that the penalty paid for love is suffering!

Of what use was her experience of stage heroines, for, after all, they are but copies of the reality.

CHAPTER II.

"It is eleven o'clock, Miss Northcote, and your breakfast will be quite cold."

Stella Northcote sprung up in bed, as lovely a vision as one could ever see, her pretty, bright curls tumbled, her beautiful eyes looking vague and uncertain, a bright, warm flush of sleep upon her cheeks.

"Eleven o'clock!" she repeated, rubbing the sleep from her eyes with her two little fists, quite after the manner of a child. "A whole hour longer than usual. Well, I've enjoyed it, Clochette, and I do not intend to scold myself at all. I've lived in fairyland all night, and used my wand with great effect. It was lovely, lovelier than I used to think the old story of the 'Arabian Nights.' But, after all, this prosaic old world is beautiful, and I love it with all my heart and long for no other."

"You have no cause to yearn for another, Miss Northcote," answered Clochette. "You are one of this world's 'favored few.' It has used you as women are rarely used, and you would be ungrateful to find fault. Your mail is in. There are a pile of letters and a package. Then messengers have brought several bouquets. One of pansies and cape jasmine is the most beautiful thing I ever saw. Will you have your mail now?"

"No, my bath first. The letters can wait, and I am as hungry as a wolf."

She leaped out of bed, went into her own little bathroom and took her plunge, which was already prepared.

She returned, radiant and smiling, was soon robed in a charming *negligee* of cream and pink *crepe*, then sat down to her breakfast and *Herald*.

"Now for my mail," she cried, springing up at last.

She leaned over and kissed the bouquet of pansies and jasmine, which bore the card of Philip Pendennis, then placing it on a table beside her, she took up her mail.

The package was opened first. It contained an exquisite pin of pink opals and diamonds, as dainty and beautiful as it was valuable.

"Oh, how lovely!" she cried, as she held them off to

have a better view. "But how careless to send it by mail."

"Opals are ill-luck, Miss Northcote. Do not accept them," urged Clochette, real concern upon her face.

"Nonsense," laughed Stella. "I know actresses are proverbially superstitious, and I am to a great extent, but I hope I do not carry it to that absurd degree. However, rest easy Clochette, for I shall not accept Raoul Brownell's charming gift."

She laid it aside, and opened her letters one after another, tossing them aside with little care.

"I think I shall have to employ a private secretary if this continues," she laughed, as she opened the last. "Ah!"—looking at the signature—"Raoul has written. Let me see:

"'MY DEAR STELLA,'—'My dear Stella' is good. I wonder where we obtained our lessons in familiarity, monsieur—'Pardon me if I presume too much in my manner of addressing you; though, whether you will or no, you are dear Stella, yes, dearest Stella, to me, though you may forbid the "my"'—as I undoubtedly shall. 'My love can be no insult to you, though it may not be acceptable; but I do love you, Stella, as women are rarely loved, with all the strength of my soul'—that sounds awfully stagey. 'You have given me no encouragement—you have appeared, I think sometimes, to actually dislike me—but even that has no power over this stemless love of mine'—'Stemless,' I must remember that. 'If you will consent to be my wife, you will not only make me the happiest of men, but the proudest as well. I am the last of an old and honored race, being absolutely without relatives; and I ask you to share with me the large fortune which has been an inheritance in the family for many generations. You shall live, as will become one of your exalted beauty, in a palace'—I wonder if it is on Lake Como—'surrounded by everything which money can purchase and love suggest.

"'I send by same mail a small token of esteem, which I hope you will not refuse, in any event. I shall take the liberty of calling this afternoon at five for my answer. If it is "No," I shall try to bear it as bravely as I can, though it will be a terrible blow; but if you can

find it in your heart not to look with disfavor upon me, I shall spend my life in my endeavors to make you happy.

"'Always your devoted,

"'RAOUL BROWNELL.'"

She sat for some minutes with the letter in her hand, turning it over and looking at it.

"I wonder if that man thinks I am for sale," she murmured at last. "I think I shall refer him to my manager, as he is the person who looks after my business interests. But Raoul Brownell is not a bad fellow after all, and I am ungrateful. He never seems sincere to me, and I do not trust him. Even this letter has a false sound, though I dare say I am wrong. But what is the use troubling my poor little head about him? I shall decline with thanks, and that will settle it."

But "man proposes and God——" Is it God always who "disposes"? or is it not sometimes black, horrible fate, superinduced by the King of Terrors, who has power, also, to sway the world?

"A lady to see you, Miss Northcote!"

The servant flung open the door, ushered in the lady and retired.

And she?

She had stepped just over the threshold of the door, far enough for it to be closed behind her, and stopped, holding her glasses to her eyes, and looking at Stella.

She was a tall woman, considerably above the average height and verging on seventy-five years of age, every day of which was written upon her face, though her figure was erect as a girl's. She was richly, elaborately dressed in black satin, of the most superlatively aristocratic make, and wrapped in sables. She carried a stick of ebony, with the huge gold head of a dragon surmounting it.

Unaccustomed as she was to nervousness of any kind, Stella nevertheless felt a shiver pass over her, as the double-barreled glasses were leveled at her and not removed.

"Will you not be seated, madam?" she asked, in her sweet, silvery voice, when she had recovered from her momentary surprise.

The lady sat in the chair indicated.

"You are 'Stella, the Star?'" she asked, in a hard, unmusical, but low-toned voice.

"I am Stella Northcote, madam; at present starring at Booth's. I think my face is fairly well known," answered Stella, drawing herself up and speaking in her most icy tone, which could almost freeze when she chose that it should.

"Possibly to the frequenters of the playhouse, but I never go there," said her visitor, sharply.

"Indeed! Then, may I ask to what I owe the honor of this visit? And to whom I have the pleasure of speaking?"

"I am a member of the old Knickerbocker stock of the early days of the city of New York, and well known among the highest classes."

"Possibly," answered Stella, a smile curving the corners of her mouth, as the lines of David Garrick came into her head; "but I am not acquainted with the Knickerbocker stock."

"I dare say. I should not have expected it. Of course, women in your profession know nothing of society."

"The women in my profession are ladies, at all events, and know how to treat members of their own sex, which is more than I can say for some of the 'Knickerbocker stock,'" returned Stella, quietly, a flush of anger rising to her fair brow. "You surely have not come here for the pleasure of insulting me, madam?"

"I have not come here from any pleasure at all, but through glaring duty, which I deeply regret."

"You cannot regret it more than I do."

Again the gold-rimmed glasses were raised, and the woman of high rank stared in well-bred astonishment at the flushed face of the girl who, though a Thespian, was none the less a lady.

"You are an impertinent girl, but an exceedingly pretty one," said the old woman, after her prolonged gaze.

"And you are an insulting old woman, and will oblige me by leaving my room," returned Stella, her justifiable anger getting the better of her.

"Hoighty-toighty! Do you know who I am, young woman?"

"No; nor care," answered Stella.

"Possibly if you knew, you would not be so quick with your flashing temper. I have come to see where the charm lies, that you can turn the heads of men of sense and learning, as well as of some of the women of the world. It is your wonderful beauty, certainly not your amiability."

"Perhaps, now that you have discovered that fact, you will leave me in peace."

"Not quite yet. There are other matters upon which I wish to speak to you."

Stella bowed in her most frigid style, and sat down, folding her pretty, patrician hands firmly, a habit which she had formed when wishing to control her temper.

"I am," began the woman, with badly concealed pomposity, "mother of a young man, of high social rank and vast wealth, whom you are leading to ruin."

"Madam," cried Stella, thoroughly aroused, "that is utterly false, and if you were not so old a woman, I would take you by the shoulders, shake you well, and put you out of my room."

Again the eye-glasses were brought to bear upon the angry girl, whose eyes were now as black as night and gleaming like stars.

"I could expect nothing better from a show-woman," remarked the visitor slowly. "It would not surprise me, even considering my age. Believe me, I would not have placed myself in a position to receive such indignity, had not circumstances demanded and forced it. I repeat it, you are leading my son to ruin. You are exerting over him some powerful influence, which you have wound about him, until he has no strength to extricate himself. He is in love with you, and I actually believe he would marry you!"

There was such genuine consternation, such unaffected horror expressed upon the woman's wrinkled face, that Stella, forgetting her own affront, burst into a peal of ringing, girlish laughter.

In her own set, the visitor never heard a hearty, simple laugh, and though she admired the musical sweetness of the sound, she shivered slightly at what she mentally termed the girl's "under-bred manner."

"I beg your pardon, madam," said Stella, when she could control her sudden burst of merriment. "Of

course it would be a *horrible* thing for a member of the 'Knickerbocker stock' to marry me, but I assure you that I neither feel the indignity which it would bring upon him, nor the honor it would confer upon me. Have no fear, madam. Your son is safe."

"Have I your promise that you will refuse my son if he should so far forget himself as to ask you to be his wife? 'Stella, the Star,' has the reputation of being an honorable woman, and though you are not of our world, something tells me that if you promise me not to marry Philip, you will keep your word. Will you do it?"

All the pretty, child-like color suddenly deserted the lovely face, and Stella sunk back in her chair as though she had received a blow.

"Whom did you say?" she gasped faintly.

"I am Mrs. Daniel Pendennis, mother of Philip Pendennis. Stella Northcote, have I your solemn promise not to marry my son?"

CHAPTER III.

For a few moments Stella sat perfectly still and mute, all powers of motion and speech seeming suddenly to have left her.

When she did speak, her voice was so hoarse, so utterly unlike the clear, beautiful voice she had heard before, that Mrs. Pendennis started.

"No. I cannot promise that," she said.

"Cannot? Why not?" demanded the member of "Knickerbocker stock," without the slightest womanly feeling.

"You do not know what you ask," returned Stella, sitting up very straight in her chair and looking at her visitor unflinchingly. "You come to me, a lonely orphan, and ask me to give up the only thing which makes life bright to me. What are you to me, that I should consent to make myself miserable for your sake?"

"I do not think that I clearly understand you."

"No, you do not understand me. Is it because love is a thing unknown in your world? or because I, a member of a once despised profession, am deemed incapable of loving?"

"Do you mean to convey that you love my son?"

"That is exactly what I mean. I love your son, if Philip Pendennis is your son, which I can hardly believe, with all my heart, and he loves me. Last night he asked me to be his wife, and will be here to-day at four for his answer."

"That answer must be 'no,' Stella Northcote."

The old woman was leaning forward now, with an expression of intense excitement upon her face.

"My answer will be 'yes,' madam," corrected Stella, firmly. "I am sorry to enter your family without your consent, but I cannot ruin my own life's happiness, as well as Philip's, for any whim. If I could see that I was harming Philip in any way, if I could see that he was likely to suffer in the slightest degree from making me his wife, I should refuse, even though my heart broke. You forget, madam, that my profession is no longer regarded by the world as it was years ago. Honest labor and intelligence have been brought to bear in the ranks, and we have been dragged, by the right hand of faithful endeavor, diligent study, quick wit, and brain cultivation, from the mire of social obscurity to a solid foothold of eminence and power. We have educated the world to appreciate our efforts and the grand art whose exponents we are. You, madam, have lived in the world, but evidently not of it. You have failed to see the improvement in men and matter. While the shroud of prejudice has fallen from other shoulders, you have wrapped it more closely about you; the dust and cobwebs have accumulated with years, and you come before me to-day and ask me to pay the price of your fidelity to first principles, of your—pardon me—your ignorance, and your injustice. I answer you frankly, madam—you demand too much."

If Mrs. Pendennis had imagined Stella Northcote to be a girl who could be easily awed by her supreme grandeur and vain boasting of "blue blood," she saw her error and changed her opinion of the beautiful actress. Mrs. Pendennis could be motherly enough when she chose, but she had clung to her old-fashioned ideas, that actresses were little above the brute creation, and it was with something like wonder, in her eagle eye, that she regarded Stella.

She arose, took a chair nearer Stella and, marvel of marvels, laid her hand upon Stella's own.

"I like you better for that. I can understand now why people speak so well of you. You are a girl whom every one must trust, for the tone of your voice and the look in your eye carry conviction. You are a dove in the nest of hawks. Stella Northcote, I wish it were possible that I could sanction your marriage with my son, but I cannot."

"Then, madam, I shall marry your son without your sanction, for I love him. I love him with all the passion of my nature, which knows no curbing or confinement. He is my all in this world and I will not give him up."

"You *must* do it. You must do it for his sake. I, his mother, who have not a thought in life but for his happiness and welfare, tell you this."

There was something strangely pathetic in the aged face, as the aristocratic old woman bent forward and looked into the beautiful, determined eyes beside her; so pathetic, that with an impulse which she could not control, Stella leaned over and kissed her upon the cheek.

The keen, gray eyes filled with tears.

"I believe I can convince you, by and by, that it is not for Philip's good that we should part," said Stella, with a tremulous smile.

"I wish you could, but it cannot be. You must give Philip up, unless you would spoil his every prospect in life, unless you would drag him to disgrace and ruin, unless you would see him miserable, heart-broken, and all through you."

Again all the color faded from the beautiful face, the lovely eyes grew wild and startled, the sweet lips trembled pitifully.

"You frighten me!" she said, shivering as one will from a rush of cold air on a warm day. "Is it my profession that would bring all that upon Philip?"

"No; it is not you, it is not your profession. You must both suffer for another's sake, but I ask you to bear the greater part, for Philip's sake. Are you brave enough to do it? Are you courageous enough to give up your love, for your lover's sake? If so, you will save

Philip. He will bless you some day and you will ever receive the loving gratitude of his mother."

"Madam," cried Stella, hoarsely, understanding that something was moving her visitor strangely and feeling that there was something beyond mere prejudice in her words, "you must explain to me what you mean. You speak in conundrums. I cannot give up my love, unless there is a motive stronger than anything which I can at present understand. You are torturing me and I beseech you not to leave me longer in ignorance. Speak out, or if there is nothing to tell, I entreat you to allow me to remain in peace."

"Listen to me, Stella," began the old lady, after a moment's painful pause, "and heed every word to which I give utterance. When I came to you this morning I came to demand my son at your hands, feeling that I spoke to a woman whose beauty and intelligence raised her a trifle above the scum of the earth, but only a trifle, but you have changed me. It has not been your words, for they have been nothing more than could have proceeded from the most ordinary intellect, but there is a strange nobility in your bearing, a total lack of guile in your manner, an entire absence of anything like subtlety or insincerity in your eyes, which shows me that you are a true woman, trustworthy, passionate, and generous.

"I am going to prove to you that I think all this, by trusting you with a family secret which even my son does not know, and which it would kill me to have him know.

"Philip has been brought up in luxury; he has never, in all his life, known an ungratified wish. There is no family in the whole city who can boast of a record so perfectly clear, of an escutcheon so entirely without flaw or blemish, and though Philip would be the last to ever speak of it, he is even more proud of it than I, and any blot upon his name would be his death-warrant.

"Stella Northcote, it rests with you whether that blow shall be dealt to Philip, or whether he shall go to his grave ignorant of the disgrace which hangs over his head.

The old voice trembled so that Mrs. Pendennis was perforce compelled to cease speaking, and if her life had depended upon it, Stella could not have articulated a word.

A film seemed to gather before her eyes, and a tight hand to grasp her throat.

"I am an old woman," continued Mrs. Pendennis, passing her handkerchief across her eyes, and it matters little what happens to me, but I cannot bear to have ignominy reflected upon the dear old name with which we have been intrusted.

"You can never know how agonizing the humiliation is, that I must repeat this story to you; but I do it, knowing that you are too generous a woman to marry my son when I have told you.

"Stella, my husband, the honored, respected, beloved Daniel Pendennis, is president of a bank, and he has unlawfully appropriated the bank's funds."

Mrs. Pendennis paused again, and Stella sat perfectly still and perfectly erect in her chair, bewildered, stunned.

"He became involved in financial difficulties, which would have ruined him, but he used the bank funds, believing, alas! as so many believe, that it could be soon and easily replaced; but his speculations have proved unlucky, and to-day he stands upon the threshold of the penitentiary. You, Stella Northcote, and you alone, can save him."

"How?"

The word came through the cold, numb lips with such a dead, leaden sound that it almost frightened even her.

"There is a young lady who would marry Philip and furnish the money to save his father, but Philip will never consent unless he thinks you are false to him."

"False to him! False to Philip! My love, my love, I could not."

The words came through the pale lips softly, and with such depths of tenderest affection that Mrs. Pendennis was touched more than she would have believed possible.

"What is your love worth," said Mrs. Pendennis, taking her hand and stroking it softly, "if it cannot make a sacrifice for its object. You must make Philip believe that you do not love him, if you would save him from disgrace."

"I *could* not. He would never believe."

"Where is all your boasted art, that you could not deceive him?"

Stella leaped to her feet and paced up and down the floor, her heart beating madly.

"Mrs. Pendennis, I am an actress, but not a falsifier. I can depict the emotions of others, but I cannot willfully play traitor to the emotions of my own heart."

Stella Northcote, do you tell me that your vaunted love is so poor a thing that you will allow the father of the man you love, an old man seventy-eight years of age, to be bowed down with grief and shame, to spend the rest of his years within the walls of a penitentiary, for the sake of a sickly sentiment which contains no more generosity than that? Oh, Stella, I thought better of you than that! He is lost, poor Philip!"

Mrs. Pendennis bowed her gray head and humiliating sobs shook her aged form. All that was good and noble in the suffering girl arose to the surface at once. She laid hand upon the bent shoulders, which seemed to have aged years in minutes, and while her beautiful face was irradiated with sacrificing love, she murmured slowly:

"Do not weep. Your husband shall be saved."

"Thank God!" cried Mrs. Pendennis, seizing Stella's dress in her hands, the revulsion of feeling almost overcoming her. "I did not believe you could be so cruel."

"How much is the amount demanded?" asked Stella, hoping she might be able to furnish it.

"Five hundred thousand," answered Mrs. Pendennis; then reading Stella's thought, and knowing that it would be impossible for her to furnish the amount, the woman of high social rank fell upon her knees in front of the actress and sobbed aloud in her agony.

"It is the only way, Stella," she said. "See, I am on my knees before you, begging for my husband's honor and my son's more than life. As you are powerful, be merciful. Spare us this shame and disgrace. It all rests with you, Stella. In the name of humanity, in the name of your love, I ask it. Would you see Philip's head bowed to the dust? Oh, girl, have pity, have pity."

"Rise, madam," answered Stella, assisting her. "I have told you your husband shall be saved for Philip's sake."

She placed her hands to her head and seemed to try to hold it, to keep it from bursting.

"You are generous. You are noble. You are true,"

said Mrs. Pendennis, kissing her hand, reverently. "How can you accomplish it, for he must not know?"

"Oh, never fear. I can find some way to make him hate me, and he shall not suspect you. You have Stella Northcote's word, and Stella Northcote does not lie. And now, madam, I must beg you to leave me, for I have many things to plan before Philip comes."

Her voice was slow and monotonous, but it did not break, even as she pronounced the name.

Mrs. Pendennis removed the traces of her emotion and turned to Stella.

"Good-bye," she said, unsteadily. "I love and honor you. If ever you are in need of a friend, come to me, and if I desert you then may God forget me. Good-bye again, and may Heaven bless and prosper you."

She kissed the cold cheek softly, then went out and closed the door.

And Stella?

She sunk down upon the floor where she had been left; she lay face downward upon the carpet, and, after unspeakable anguish, she subdued her heart, and won the bitterest battle that ever mortal waged.

CHAPTER IV.

How long Stella remained prostrate upon the floor a prey to the most poignant grief and crying out against the injustice of her cruel fate she could never remember. Nor could she remember what eventually aroused her from her consequent legarthy, but the cold water with which she afterward bathed her face revived her.

Clochette entered a few moments later, and found her with glowing cheeks and dancing eyes almost consumed with fever.

"Mr. Pendennis awaits you, Miss Northcote," said Clochette, respectfully. "Why, Miss Northcote, are you ill?"

"No. Do I look ill?"

"Very, very beautiful. But your cheeks are unusually crimson."

Stella laughed mirthlessly. Then, going to her mirror, she carefully arranged her hair, and entered the room where Philip Pendennis awaited her.

He was looking at some photographs when she stood before him, but he put them down, and, with a smile of ineffable happiness upon his handsome lips, he advanced to her, and, putting his arms around her, kissed her tenderly.

And she—allowed it!

Why should she not? Was it not her last taste of happiness in this world? Poor child!

"How lovely you look, my darling! Come, sit beside me, and tell me what you have done all the long morning."

He sat upon a couch and drew her down beside him, his arm still about her.

"What have I done?" repeated Stella, with forced gayety. "Nothing, absolutely nothing."

"How strangely you look, Stella! Not like my little girl at all. What is it, darling?"

"There is nothing the matter with me. Possibly I am a little upset. You would not believe it, Mr. Pendennis, but I have actually had four proposals by letter this morning, and one of them expressed his determination to call for an answer at five to-day."

"Did he? Then I shall have the pleasure of giving him his answer. Who is he?"

"Raoul Brownell."

"Raoul Brownell," repeated Philip, in some astonishment. "I don't like Raoul Brownell, but if ever he proposed to a woman before no one ever heard of it, and he is by far the wealthiest single man in New York."

"Is it so wonderful, after all, that he should propose to me? Tell me, Philip, did *you* ever ask any other woman to be your wife?"

A flush arose to Philip's brow, and for a moment he hesitated, but his answer was truthful.

"Yes, Stella. I was engaged to a lady once, but I did not love her. We had a misunderstanding, and she gave me my freedom. I was so pleased that I never offered myself the second time when our little quarrel had blown over."

"Was she very wealthy?"

"Yes, very."

"Have you as much money, Philip, as Raoul Brownell?"

"No. Why do you ask?"

He looked at her curiously, then kissed her pretty lips again.

"Philip, of all evils in the world, which would you think hardest to bear?"

"Why, what a question, under the circumstances, sweetheart. Can we not talk upon pleasanter themes than the ills of life?" asked Philip, laughing lightly.

"But answer me," she persisted. "Think, and answer truly."

"Dishonor!" he said, without a pause.

"Would that be worse than losing me? Think, Philip! Could you bear dishonor for my sake?"

"No, Stella, not even for your sake!" he answered, while a frown gathered upon his clear brow. "But thank God, my darling, I will never be called upon to choose between you and shame."

She smiled wearily and kissed him.

"Suppose, Philip," she said, not able to meet his eye, and leaning her head upon his shoulder to avoid it, "suppose I should tell you that I do not love you, would you believe me?"

"Suppose," he returned, smiling brightly, "you should tell me that truth is fiction, that the sun is cold, that the earth will never again revolve. Suppose you should tell me that to-morrow will be the day of resurrection, would I believe you? Ask me if I would insult you and make your position now that of a profligate woman?"

She shivered and drew herself quickly from his arms.

He looked at her in surprise.

"Stella, what *is* the matter with you? You are so utterly unlike yourself."

"Mr. Pendennis, last night you asked me to be your wife, and I told you to call to-day for your answer. Are you ready to hear it?"

"How extremely tragic. Yes, Stella, I am always ready to hear you say you love me. Shall I repeat the question, that you may have a better opportunity?" he asked playfully.

"If you wish."

"Stella, will you be my wife?" with affected tearfulness.

"Do not mock me, Philip. I am more serious than ever in my life before. *I cannot be your wife, Philip.*"

"He turned deadly pale, so pale that, as Stella raised her eyes to his for a single moment, she thought she had killed him.

"That joke is in bad taste, and unworthy of you, my Stella," he said unsteadily, and with a forced laugh. "But the brief instant after you said it showed me how impossible it would be for me to live without you. Don't look at me like that, Stella; you frighten me."

She was standing before him, gazing into his eyes with all her soul, her hands clasped tightly, her face ghastly.

"Does not your heart tell you," she answered, slowly, "that I have spoken truly? Can you not see that I am saying good-bye to you now, forever?"

Again his face became unrecognizable in its frightful pallor.

"Stella," he gasped, grasping her wrist almost roughly, "what do you mean by torturing me like this? Is there some fiendish pleasure which you derive from seeing my pain?"

"Philip, you are hurting me."

"Forgive me," he cried, kissing the delicate wrist, upon which his strong fingers had rested. "I did not mean to hurt you, but you see now what a brute you have the power of making me."

He strained her to his breast, and kissed her passionately.

She returned the caress, then disengaged herself from his arms.

"That is the last, the very last in this world, Philip."

"What do you mean?" he asked, hoarsely. "Stella, do you love me?"

"You know it."

"Then why do you speak of 'last times' and 'farewell'?"

"I am not fit to be your wife, Philip; I cannot bring shame upon you."

She lowered her eyes, and would not look at him for fear he might read her secret.

He remained so silent for some seconds that she was dismayed, then he laughed, but his voice was hard and grating.

"You bring shame to me!" he repeated. "Why, you are as pure as an infant. I would not believe an angel fresh from heaven, that told me the reverse."

"I am not worthy of you, Philip. Believe me, it is true."

"I am the best judge of that. Stop this scene, Stella," he replied, sternly. "You are needlessly torturing me. I tell you, and you may be sure that I mean it, that I would not give you up, not if all the world were against you. You are mine."

"No, Philip, I am not, and never can be."

He was silent again, and when he spoke a great change had come over him, though not a muscle in his face had moved.

"Had you all this in your mind yesterday, when you asked me to call to-day?" he asked, with stinging sarcasm.

"No."

"Then what has altered your determination?"

"I—I cannot tell—you."

"You shall! Do you think I am a man to be lightly handled? Do you think I am a man to be played with, then tossed aside when the freak seizes you? Stella Northcote, if you are a coquette, which I do not believe, you will find that you have played fast and loose with the wrong man this time. You have taken all the heart out of my body and you will see how a heartless man can act. But then! Of course you are not serious, and I am speaking like a frenzied fool. I love you, Stella, love you with my entire soul, and only seeing you belong to another, would ever make me give you up."

In an instant her resolution was taken, and she paused not to think of the long years of misery she was bringing upon herself, which might have so easily been avoided by the exertion of a little bravery and fortitude.

"You will see that, Philip. See how unworthy I am of your love and trust. Even now Raoul Brownell should be here. You shall hear my answer to his proposal of marriage."

"You would not do the cruel thing you suggest, you could not! It would ruin me, body and soul. Think, Stella! For God's sake, think what you contemplate

doing. That man is a drunkard and a *roue.* Do not, in the name of humanity, condemn yourself to a life of wretchedness, even if you have no pity for me. You must not do it, you shall not!"

"Mr. Brownell!"

The door was thrown open, the name announced, the man entered, the servant retired and closed the door.

Seeing the peculiar positions of the parties, Brownell remained mute, and the three looked at each other in silence.

He was a man of massive build, particularly strong and well-built, a magnificent specimen of animal manhood. His mouth was wide, his lips thick and sensual, his jaw square cut, powerful and determined. His eyes were steel gray, his hair a light, almost red, brown.

"Mr. Brownell," said Stella, when she could find her voice, and speaking rapidly lest her courage should fail her, "I received a letter from you this morning, and I presume you have come for its answer."

He bowed in silence, utterly unable to understand.

"My reply is that I shall be glad to become your wife."

The extraordinary scene upset his accustomed *sang froid;* but he soon recovered himself, and, advancing, took her hand silently and raised it to his lips.

"Stella!" cried Pendennis, in a hoarse, strident voice.

With eyes flaming and breath coming thick and fast, he advanced, his hands clinched; but, before he could reach Brownell, some sudden emotion overcame him, and, throwing up his hands, he fell before them, apparently as lifeless as though he had been struck down by a thunderbolt.

Seeing what she had done, all the gentle, womanly nature of the girl arose at once.

"Philip, my love!" she cried, and would have thrown herself across his body, but Brownell interfered.

"My promised wife has no right to play melodrama over my fallen rival and her discarded lover," he said, quietly, with a deadly sort of glitter in his gray eyes.

CHAPTER V.

THERE are many houses in the metropolis exactly like, or very similar to, No. — Fifty-Second Street on the outside, but for delicate, refined elegance its equal on the interior would be difficult to find.

The furniture was of the most costly rosewood and mahogany, trimmed with heavy brasses and solid silver, the floors were of hard wood and inlaid with matchless art, over which Turkish, Persian, and Oriental rugs were thrown with careless grace. The drapings were plentiful and consisted of finest silk plush and costly lace. The *bric-a-brac* was of fabulous value—Sevres vases, magnificent ornaments in bisque, Florentine bronzes, terra-cotta; and the walls were lined with pictures by such artists as Raphael, Titians, Messonier, and the old Italian masters. The silver table-service was the finest in the whole country, and had been in the family for generations, some of it crested with royal arms in the time of William the Conqueror, pieces which, like people, had grown useless with age, but were preserved and guarded for their antiquity and the tale they told of ancestors of noble blood.

The mistress of this mansion sat in her own boudoir, dressed in a robe of old rose crepe, embroidered in seed pearls.

Her beautiful, bronze-gold hair was loosened and fell over the back of her luxurious chair in natural waves and curls. Her rounded arms, from which the loose sleeves had fallen back, were raised above her head, shining like polished marble in the delicately tinted light of the room. The purple eyes were closed, leaving the long, dark lashes resting upon cheeks the color of the lining of conch shells. Her dainty feet were raised upon an embroidered stool. A late magazine, with uncut leaves, lay in her lap, and by her side, upon a table of onyx and gilt, was a jeweled paper-cutter and a fan of long ostrich plumes.

This woman, beautiful beyond description, known to the public as Stella Northcote, was Mrs. Raoul Brownell.

"If you please, Mrs. Brownell, Mr. Earlscourt is downstairs, and wishes to see you."

"Bring him here," Clochette," cried the lovely vision. "It is more comfortable than that big barn of a drawing-room."

Her maid bowed and left her, returning with a tall, manly, handsome fellow, with hair the color of ripe chestnuts and eyes of a dark, almost black brown.

"Ted!" exclaimed Stella, springing up and extending both hands when her maid had retired and closed the door, "I am so glad to see you again. How do you do? and how have you been? and how is everybody?"

"Haven't gotten over your old propensity, I see, Stel, of asking a dozen questions in a breath; but I'm awfully glad to see you, just the same. Did you get in last night?"

"Yes. The odious train was about 'steen hours' late, as usual, but we finally pulled up in Jersey City; and after about an hour's buffeting about in a hideous hired cab, I was dumped out here."

"Oh, Stel, Stel! Is our head at last becoming enlarged, old girl? I remember a time when you and I used to take rides in those same hideous hired cabs, and thought it great fun. I recall one time when we had a horse so thin that every rib could be easily counted, and the driver had to beat the poor animal with the butt end of his whip to make him move at all."

"Do you suppose I forget it? I think those were the happiest days of my life," answered Stella, with a sigh. "But, there! Don't let us talk upon that subject, or I shall get a fit of the blues. Let me tell you about my trip. It has been something beautiful. I have scored a tremendous hit wherever I have appeared, and am a greater favorite than ever all over the country. I remain here eights weeks now; and, though I have enjoyed the change, I am delighted to get home, Ted, I can tell you, for I am tired. It has been hard work."

"Why do you remain on the stage, Stel? You are rich enough, the Lord knows, and famous. Why don't you retire on your laurels? I wonder that his Royal Highness Prince Raoul allows you to remain."

"'Allows' is not a word which is ever used between Raoul and me. We are a most model husband and wife, I assure you. Sometimes he becomes a trifle obstreperous, and dictates; but I assume one of my penny tragedy

airs, and 'sit down' on him. You see, I have not forgotten my slang. Raoul tells me it is my plebeian, mountebank blood which crops out now and then; but I think, if I tried, I could trace my ancestry back to the time when the Bible was taught by acting, and we have all been in the same profession ever since, which is more than he can say. Give up the stage, you say, Ted! Why, I should break down and become toothless and gray in a month. 'It is the life I love, but fools would fly from it.' No, Ted, I could give up my home, my husband, my wealth, even my friends, and live on 'uncared for and alone;' but not my profession. It is the 'life of my life, soul of my soul.'"

"Stel, I don't believe you love Raoul Brownell."

"You should not grow personal, my dear friend; it is impolite. I should have thought 'play-acting' would have taught you that."

"Why did you marry him, Stella?"

"Have you eyes to see and ears to hear? Look around you. The fatal, irresistible tide is hourly advancing and every wave is red with—gold. Look about and see what you see, Ted. Gold or its equivalent. Go down on Wall Street and hear what men of business and finance say of Raoul Brownell's increasing fortune. Raoul is a handsome man, he is a rich man, and he leaves me my beloved profession."

"That is not the reason you married him, Stella. I have heard you too often express your disgust for girls who sold themselves for gold. I know you too well, Stella."

"You don't know me at all, Ted. I am the most changed woman under the sun. Let me see, how long have I been married? Just two months and yet I am completely metamorphosed."

"Why did you not marry Phil Pendennis, Stel?"

For the space of a minute there was dead silence in the room. Ted Earlscourt saw that he had stepped on delicate ground, but he and Stella were old friends and he desired to help her if he could.

"He is a rattling good fellow and was awfully fond of you. They say that when you married Brownell in so off-hand a manner that he went off his head for awhile and they had to keep him confined."

Stella laughed, but it had a discordant, forced sound and her face was deadly pale.

No doubt he has forgotten it now. Two months is a long time, and I hear he is wonderfully attentive to Miss Delmer."

"I don't believe it. I saw him on the street yesterday and he looks awfully cut up. They say he fainted in your room, at the Albemarle, Stel, and you had him carted home. Is that true?"

"He fainted in my room, yes, and when we could not do anything with him, I telegraphed his mother. She had him 'carted home,' as you call it."

"And he was raving in delirium when you married and went away. Oh, Stella! I used to think you were in love with him, which kept me from trying to win you myself. Why didn't you marry him, Stella?"

"Don't be an idiot, Ted. You know even the Mormons don't allow a woman the liberty of having two husbands at the same time, and I could not resist Raoul's ducats. I haven't that much strength of mind, you know. Now let us talk about something else. How have you been getting along? Left me, you rascal, to go with Barrett. Are you tired of him?"

"You know I only did it so that I would not have to leave the city. It nearly breaks my poor old mother's heart to have me leave her. Sometimes I think of giving up the stage on her account."

"Nonsense. We couldn't get along without you. Besides, you would be unhappy."

"Stella, I have a favor that I want you to do me. Will you?"

"I thought it was always women who asked people to promise blindly. I see men are no better. What is it, Ted?"

"I found a poor little miserable girl the other day, and I want you to help me look after her. Let me tell you something about it first, before you answer. About a week ago I was way down-town, looking around among pawnbrokers and curiosity dealers for an historical dagger that I wanted as a 'prop,' when I came across a child sitting on the curbstone crying. Well, she was a sight! 'Good-for-Nothing Nan' wasn't a circumstance. She had been gathering rags and a lot of other trash out of

the barrels on the sidewalk, and was the biggest rag herself of the whole lot. Her hair—well, it was the blackest hair that ever I saw, blacker than the blackest bottle of Worden's ink that was ever made, and hung all over her, looking as if it had never seen a comb in the world. She was digging her dirty little fists in her eyes with all her might, and her face was one smear from hair to chin. 'What is the matter, little one?' said I. She looked up at me, and I tell you frankly, Stella, that she had the face of an angel. With the exception of yours, I never saw such a beautiful face in all my life. Her eyes are those big Oriental affairs that one reads about, but seldom sees, and are as black as her hair. When I spoke to her she leaped to her feet and put on a hat, which would have done credit to a full-fledged American cowboy.

"Her dress was as ragged as—as—well, you know I am a bad hand at a simile, but it couldn't have been 'raggeder.' There! That is a new word for your dictionary. When I asked her what made her cry, she answered:

"'I am hungry and tired and cold, and that's matter enough, ain't it?' looking me in the eyes very steadily and looking awfully pretty.

"'Quite enough,' I answered. 'Why don't you go home?'

"''Cause I'd get licked, and that would only make me cry more.'

"I asked her to go with me to a restaurant, and told her I would get her something to eat. She went readily enough, and while she was eating she told me her story. She had been brought up by some drunken old harridan, and had been made to work like a dog, and had been beaten and starved ever since she could remember. First they made her beg. Then she used to sing in the streets; but a few days ago she contracted such a heavy cold that she could not sing, and they forced her to pick the ash barrels. She told her story so simply and pitifully that—you know what a soft-hearted fool I am—it made me cry, and she looked at me as though she thought I had suddenly gone mad. Then I asked her to go home with me to my mother. I was a long time in persuading her, because she was afraid they would find her and kill her; but she finally consented. Mother, of course, was horri-

fied at first, and she has not entirely gotten over it, for I actually believe she fears that some time I might fall in love with her. Well, of all the pig-headed, inflexible, stubborn girls that ever were put on this earth, that mite lays over the deck. She has taken it into her head that she must work and be independent, and I am afraid she'll run away if I don't let her do it. Now, what am I to do with her, Stella? I don't know any more than the dead what to put her at."

"How old is she?" asked Stella, with a thoughtful look upon her pretty face.

"About sixteen, I guess; but she is the tiniest little morsel that ever I saw."

"Why don't you put her on the stage?"

"Lord bless you, she don't know enough."

"It's a good school."

"Yes, I know. But I don't believe anybody would have her. She'd have to go in for general utility, and I don't think she'd amount to anything as an actress."

"I'll take her if you like and see what can be done. I am going to put on 'Led Astray' in a week or two, and she can try the maid's part. It is only two or three lines."

"How kind of you, Stella. I know it will be a real relief to mother, for she is frightened to death when a petticoat comes near me for fear of my marrying, never thinking that I could possibly be rejected."

"Bring her in to-morrow, Ted, and I'll see what can be done for her."

"All right, dear, but don't expect to see much, for she is about the tartest-looking customer in her clothes that ever you saw. Mother is too old to get out much and the selections have been left pretty much to her. I've got to go now, Stel. You are awfully good to me, old girl, to help me in this affair, and I hope to do as much for you some day. I was in a terrible hole, I tell you."

He arose as he spoke, and stood before her six feet of as handsome manhood as one could find.

"What a good-hearted fellow you are, Ted. If I were not married, I think I should be inclined to be a trifle jealous of your heroine of the ash-barrel."

"If you were not married, there is no woman on earth

who could attract me from you for half a second. Ah, Stel, I believe you would have been happy with me, dear —happier than you are now, notwithstanding all this gorgeousness. Of course, it is too late; but don't you agree with me?"

She stood beside him, and laid her beautiful hand upon his shoulder.

"I love you, Ted, as I would love my brother if I had one, and will always love you the same way. I was nothing of a flirt in my girlhood; but I am afraid I have changed somewhat since I have been a wife. It should have been the other way, shouldn't it? I tell you this because I happen to be in an humble mood, and I would not give you pain for all the world. Remember what I have said to you, Ted, and if ever I am tempted to allow you to make love to me unreproved, think of it, dear, and don't believe me."

"You are not happy, Stella," he said, placing his arm around her tenderly. "Won't you trust me, dear, and tell me what it is?"

She laid her head upon his arm for a moment and sobbed.

He drew her closely to him and kissed her bright hair lightly.

At the same moment a knock sounded upon the door, and without waiting for permission, Raoul Brownell entered his wife's boudoir.

CHAPTER VI.

EARLSCOURT had just time to withdraw his arm from Stella's waist, when her husband entered the apartment. But even then the situation was compromising, for Stella's eyes were wet with tears and they were standing in extremely close proximity.

"How do you do, Brownell," exclaimed Earlscourt, endeavoring by affected pleasure at seeing him, to cover the awkwardness of his position. "You see I utilized my first opportunity in calling upon you and your wife."

"I see," answered Brownell curtly, and shaking hands coldly, then turning to his wife, he asked with badly concealed sarcasm, "Are you ill, Stella? or in pain?"

"Neither," she replied, shortly.

"Would it be in bad taste for me to ask the cause of your tears?"

"I was telling your wife the story of a little girl whom I have recently adopted, after a manner," interrupted Earlscourt, calmly, "and it affected her. She has promised, with your permission, to assist me with my charge."

Brownell bowed.

"I never interfere with my wife's charities," he answered, icily. "She does exactly as she likes."

"I was about taking my leave when you entered," continued Earlscourt. "Will we see you at the Lotus to-night after the performance?"

"No. I have announced a small impromptu dinner at Delmonico's to-night at twelve. I just came to inform my wife of it. There will be only a few people as it is so hurriedly arranged, and I can hardly say who they will be, as there is little time for 'regrets,' and most every one will be engaged. Will you favor us?"

There was no warmth or cordiality in the invitation, on the contrary, it said plainly, "have the goodness to decline," but Earlscourt, if he saw it, did not choose to heed.

"I shall be most happy," he answered graciously, utterly ignoring Brownell's stiffness. "And now I must bid you both *au revoir.*"

He shook hands with them, and was about to take his departure.

"I say, Ted," exclaimed Stella in defiance of her husband's contracted brows, "bring that *protegee* of yours along. It is not a 'stag,' is it, Raoul?"

"Of course not."

"Then bring her, Ted, will you? Her freshness may relieve the tedium."

"It is kind of you to ask her. If she will consent, I shall be glad to take her, but she is so extremely diffident that I am afraid she will refuse. You wouldn't believe that a street arab could be, but ''tis true, 'tis pity, and pity 'tis 'tis true.' Again good-bye. Don't trouble to come or have me shown to the door. I like to preserve my Bohemianism even in the palace of a queen."

He laughed lightly, closed the door, and was gone.

Raoul Brownell turned to his wife with a thunder cloud on his handsome face.

"Perhaps, now that we are alone, you will condescend to explain to me the meaning of that little emotional farce in which you were indulging when I entered."

"Really, my dear Raoul, you must become better acquainted with theatrical terms before you indulge in them. My brain is usually quick, but 'emotion' and 'farce' are two such opposite terms that, when used together, I grope in vain for their meaning."

"Very well, I will speak in plain English. Why were you posing before that d——d harlequin when I came in? What was the meaning of your tears? I want you to understand once for all, that I will not have you flirting with every Tom, Dick and Harry who happens to look at you. Your conduct ever since I married you has been disgraceful, and now you culminate it by receiving cast-off lovers in your boudoir. That man shall come here no more."

Stella crossed her arms upon her breast and stood before him, drawing herself up to her full height, which measured about five feet six.

"My dear Raoul," she said slowly, her purple eyes becoming ominously dark, "I am noted among my friends for my serenity of temper, but you are presuming too far. Ted Earlscourt is my old and valued friend, and to begin at the tag end of your exceedingly ill-timed and tuned remarks, he shall come here just as often as he likes. If you are master of this house, I am mistress, and have equal rights. I am not dependent upon you and I shall do precisely as I like, regardless of your wishes. I am weary of your endless jealousies. You have insulted me and I brook that from no man. I do not wish to quarrel with you—first, because it is fatiguing, and secondly, because it is exceedingly vulgar. This room is mine and I shall receive in it precisely whom I please. I made no magniloquent boasts of my unalterable and undying love for you. You married me because I was famous and beautiful and you knew men would envy you your possession. I married you—well, because you offered a good setting for the jewel. We have both got what we bargained for, and there is no reason why we should make ourselves any more miserable than the forfeit of life demands. But understand me once and for all, I neither ask nor desire to know how you pass your time, and I do

not propose to be spied upon by you. If I die first, I will return to you your name, at least, as untarnished as when I received it. If you are not satisfied there is always the divorce court. I have made you a long speech, but I think I have defined our positions."

"You have spoken," returned Raoul, calmly, but with passion at white heat, "as I might have expected from a woman of your antecedents. I shall not endeavor to arrest your downward course again, but I will not have my name dragged through the mire by you. I will put you out of the way first."

"Ned Buntline ought to know you, my dear," returned Stella, shrugging her beautiful shoulders. "You would make a capital heavy villain in a dime novel."

At that moment a knock sounded upon the door and Clochette entered.

"Your carriage is at the door, madame," she said, softly.

"Very well, Clochette," answered Stella, serenely. "See if my flowers have arrived, then come and dress me."

Clochette bowed and withdrew.

"I am going to try my new bays in the park this afternoon, Raoul. Will you come with me?" she continued, as though only the white flag had been waving.

"Certainly," he answered, lighting a cigar and preparing to enjoy himself in his own way. "I am not desirous of flaunting my domestic tiffs in the faces of my friends. Do you object to my cigar?"

"No, of course not; but I am going to dress now, and would feel grateful if you will wait for me in the drawing-room or smoking-room."

Raoul bowed and left her.

* * * * * *

About two hours afterward a horseman dashed up in front of another brown stone mansion on Fifth Avenue, and, throwing his bridle to his groom, rushed into the house and to his mother's private sitting-room.

He entered without knocking and stood before her, pale and disheveled, utterly unlike his usual nonchalant, debonair self.

"They have come, and I saw them together in the

park," he cried, flinging himself into a chair and covering his white face with his shaking hands.

"Who? What? What is the matter, Philip, and what are you talking about?" asked his mother, starting up in alarm.

"Stella and that coxcomb of a husband of hers," groaned Philip.

"So she has returned, has she?" asked his mother, after several moments of silence. "Does she play here?"

"Yes. Opens to-night at the Fifth Avenue. I knew that, and had already bought a box for the season; but to run across her unexpectedly completely upset me. I can never bear it, mother. My heart is broken. If it had not been for that cursed delirium I might have prevented her selling herself to that coward and idiot. But it is done now. I thought I had schooled myself pretty well; but when I saw his confounded smile of possession to-day, I believe I should have gone mad if I had not run my horse with all force straight home. She did not see me, I think, but he did, and bowed in his most careless manner. She loved me, I know she did, but she sold herself to him because he possessed more gold."

He wound up with an awful groan, and buried his head in his mother's lap.

"Philip," she said, chiding him affectionately, her own voice trembling with emotion, "you are acting like a schoolboy. I never gave you credit for so little bravery. She has thrown you over; why not show her that you do not care? Foolishly as you are acting, you will only give that man cause to gloat over you."

"I will kill him, curse him," cried Philip, rising and striding up and down the floor. "Love turns us all into schoolboys, when we love truly, and I worshiped that woman. But she shall not think that I care. Don't be afraid of that."

"Why not marry Winifred Delmer now, Philip, and show her that you are cured of your infatuation?" asked the old diplomatist.

"I am not such a scoundrel as that. I will never ask any woman to accept what is not mine to give. If Stella Northcote is never my wife, I swear that no woman ever shall be."

"Philip, Philip, of what are you speaking? Stella

Northcote is married, and if she were not, surely you would not marry her now."

"Yes, I would," he returned, passionately. "I would marry her if I had to count up dollar for dollar with another man who was a purchaser in the field. That shows you how far my madness has gone. I love her, love her and would buy her with gold before I would accept another woman's idolatrous love. What think you of that?"

"I think you are an idiot, if you wish me to speak plainly. To marry Winifred is a debt you owe her. Remember how she saved your father's bank from going under, at the risk of all her fortune. It would have broken your father's heart, and we should have been ruined."

"I can't help it, mother. I will marry no woman. I cannot. Don't harass me about it now. I am in no humor."

"Are you going to see her play to-night?"

"Yes."

"What does she play?"

"Camille."

"I never saw the inside of a theater in my life, Philip. Will you take me to see this play to-night?"

He looked at her incredulously.

"What!" he exclaimed, in surprise. "You really wish it? I suppose it is because you desire to see what manner of woman this is, who has power to make of your son a raver and a fool. Very well, you shall go. Ask Winifred to go with us. You will no longer wonder at my misery."

"The mail, madam," announced Mrs. Pendennis' maid, entering.

She laid it upon a table and retired.

Mrs. Pendennis handed Philip a letter.

"Only one for you by this post."

He opened it, and an exclamation of amazement escaped his lips.

"What is it?" asked his mother,

"Listen to this!" he cried, in excitement. "Did you ever hear such impertinence. 'Dear Pendennis,—I am expecting a few friends to dine with me to-night at twelve at Delmonico's. Entirely informal and impromptu.

Will you come? My wife will be pleased to renew an old acquaintance, and I to welcome an old friend. Always the same. BROWNELL.'"

"Of course you will ignore it," said Mrs. Pendennis, in apprehension.

"Of course I shall do nothing of the kind," answered Philip, his face pale and distorted with passion. "I shall see Stella Northcote play to-night, and I shall dine with Mr. and Mrs. Raoul Brownell after the performance.

CHAPTER VII.

THE green curtain which screened the drop of the Fifth Avenue Theater was slowly raised, and the orchestra took their seats and began an overture from "La Traviata." The house was packed with the wealth and beauty of the town, all gathered together to do homage to the fair queen of the emotional drama.

"What a superb house! It seems that the whole city has turned out in full force to-night."

The words were addressed by a pretty, delicate-looking, high-bred girl to Philip Pendennis, who stood behind her chair, his face as pale as death, his dark eyes glowing like stars.

He scarcely seemed to hear her, but looked, with eyes that saw nothing, over the gathered throng.

His mother put out her hand and touched him.

"Philip," she said, "Philip, calm yourself."

He smiled vaguely at her and retained his position until the curtain arose upon the first act.

Philip Pendennis could have told nothing of the stage setting, he was watching the center door, with his very soul in his eyes, the door through which he knew she would shortly appear, she who was more than all the world to him.

Nichette and Nanine never seemed so dull, and De Varville was maddening in his stupidity.

Then she came!

His blood seemed to become suddenly torpid and inactive, a film gathered before his eyes, and he called all his resolution to his aid to prevent his falling.

The audience cheered and cheered, until it seemed that

the very boards of the stout old floor were becoming loosened.

She threw her cloak upon the back of a chair, advanced to the fire, and drawing off her gloves threw them carelessly upon the mantel, bowing her thanks to the audience.

She did not look toward the box which contained the Pendennis party, and Philip had time to fully recover himself. He bent with great *impressement* over Miss Delmer, seeming to be oblivious to everything but her charms, but in reality losing not one word that fell from the lips of the beautiful actress, nor not one move of her serpentine grace.

She turned her eyes to look at De Varville.

He had given her cue, and she responded readily enough, the words which she had spoken hundreds of times before:

"'Monsieur de Varville, I am at liberty to love whom I please.'"

Then she caught sight of Philip, for the first time since the day upon which she dealt herself what she feared would be her death-blow, and he had fallen at her feet.

He had been whispering something to Miss Delmer, and raised his eyes with a half sneer to the face of the actress.

The remainder of the speech left her, and for one moment she stood, with open mouth, gazing at him. She staggered, and through all her *rouge* grew livid. Then, with a superhuman effort, she pulled herself together, and went on.

Camille never was before, and never will be again, played as Stella Northcote played it that night. There was a vehement, a fervid, impassioned, burning intensity about it, which made the spectators draw their breath almost in bewilderment. The fire seemed to scorch them, her love for Armand seemed to blister their souls with its torrid heat. They forgot the play, and wept at the heroic martyrdom of the noble-hearted, though guilty, woman.

Even Philip forgot the part for which he had cast himself, and was enthralled by the actress' wonderful art which concealed and yet revealed the crushed, bruised, bleeding soul of the woman.

Her scene with Duval *pere* was the consummation of dramatic skill. Realizing the close resemblance between

it and one in which she had participated, Mrs. Pendennis drew back in her box, and with dilated eyes and quivering, gasping breath, watched the scene.

As it progressed, her hands clinched tightly, her face became rigid and set, her lips were drawn in a straight line. She bore it bravely, until with a burst of such agony as only comes from the reality of a tortured, broken heart, Camille gave utterance to the words:

"Ah, fear nothing! He will hate me! I will teach him. I know how; for I have taught myself."

The old face relaxed, a heavy groan of mortal anguish escaped from the old lips, but the younger companions were so engrossed that they heard not. She clasped her hands over her heart and waited, seeming to strain her very life to catch the girl's next words. She heard them coming from lips which seemed to have become numb and cold from excess of feeling. They hesitated and stiffened over the words as though her heart's blood were being wrung from her.

"When the heart that now is breaking lies pulseless in the grave—when the world records my very virtues to my blame—when Armand's voice shall rise with curses on my memory—tell him—Oh! tell him how I loved him."

With a long, shivering sigh, the old lady staggered to her feet. Her face was ghastly, her nostrils distended. She caught her son's arm in a grasp like iron.

"Take me away!" she cried out in her agony. "I can bear it no longer. Quick! quick, or I shall die!"

Philip sprung to his feet and threw his arm about his mother, none too soon, for in another moment consciousness had left her.

He carried her to the rear of the box and laid her upon a sofa.

Quietly they worked over her, he and Miss Delmer, but it was a long swoon.

"I should not have allowed her to come to see this of all plays," whispered Philip to Miss Delmer. "She never was in a theater before, and I ought to have known how it would affect her."

They bathed her face in ice water, and after a time she sat up.

"Can you go now, mother?" asked Philip, tenderly. "I will support you."

"Yes, yes," she whispered, feverishly. "Take me now."

She arose unsteadily to her feet, and fascinated by the play as a moth is drawn to the candle which consumes it, she stepped to the front of the box once more. The curtain was just about to fall. The closing words of the act reached her, seeming to parch her heart with a significance of prophecy:

"Father, my heart is shattered."

She choked back a terrible cry as the curtain rolled down, and turning, laid her hand upon her son's arm, and he led her from the house.

They left Miss Delmer at her own door, and proceeded home.

"Don't leave me, Philip," cried his mother, clutching his arm nervously as he placed her in her armchair and was about to leave her with her maid. "You may go, Louise, and return when I ring."

"You must not agitate yourself like this, dear," said Philip, soothing her. "Remember it was only a play."

"Only a play!" she repeated, shuddering. "Yes, I do remember. She is a beautiful woman, Philip."

She was watching him narrowly. His eyes filled with tears, and he turned his head aside.

"Very," he replied, briefly.

"Oh, Philip, do you love her as that man in the play did that woman? Tell me, my son! Or does your feeling pale before that other, which scorched his very being?"

"There are no words on earth which could express my love for Stella," he answered, in a hollow voice.

"And suppose, Philip—suppose," she continued, rising and resting her hand on his shoulder, "that some one should part you from one you loved as that man's father did him from Camille, what would you do?"

"I could not kill my father, but I would never look upon his face again. I should despise a man who could so far forget the passions of a heart as to separate me from a woman I loved because of a paltry pride. There is nothing which could excuse it."

A sob, bitter and broken, interrupted him.

"But I rave," he said, with a short laugh. "Stella's marriage has not lessened my love. She has lost my respect, but it only shows what fools men are who assert that there is no love without respect. You are nervous and upset. Let me go now that you may retire."

"One moment. Are you going to accept of Raoul Brownell's hospitality to-night?"

"Yes."

"Philip, do not!"

"Why?"

"It is not right. Would you so wrong a man, knowing that you loved his wife?"

"He did not hesitate to buy her, knowing that she loved me," he returned bitterly.

"But you go there as his friend, my son. Think of how dishonorably you will act."

"He invites me to flaunt his gain in my face, and he shall find that he is attacking the wrong man."

"She is his now, Philip. Oh, my darling, remember that!" cried his mother frantically.

"Do you think I ever forget it? I am a fool, I know. She is not worthy of one thought from an honest man, but I love her. I am going to be her husband's guest to-night, and I will win her from him if it costs me my life. His gold bought her, and a superior amount can buy her back for me. If not—— Bah! we shall see!"

He kissed his mother lightly, and strode from the room.

When he had left her she crouched down before the fire, and held her withered hands closely over the bright blaze.

"I have ruined her life and his," she murmured hoarsely. "Ruined them for a few paltry dollars, and what will be the result? He thinks she sold herself. Ah! if he only knew that his mother sold them both! But he must not, shall not! Now, what will he do? He is like a madman. He is mad, mad with grief and pain and love. O God! if I could only know! If I could only look into the future and see!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE sweet breath of flowers made heavy the atmosphere of the rooms set apart for Raoul Brownell's guests at Delmonico's.

He and his wife had been left there by their magnificent landau; and on going to the room arranged temporarily as a dressing-room for ladies, she found a gorgeous stand of flowers awaiting her.

The peculiarity of the design attracted her attention. It was about five feet high, and represented a mirror resting upon a stand, composed of pure white camellias. It was evidently intended as an illustration of "holding the mirror up to nature," for reflected from it, on a background of dead black, was a large heart of red camellias, the lower one being crushed and bruised. It was held in place by heavy golden chains, and underneath was penciled, in red letters: "Amour fait beaucoup, mais argent fait tout."*

She looked at it long and earnestly, the significance being only too apparent; then she discovered the card attached to it by a broken chain, which had been relinked by a heavy band of gold, studded with precious stones. It bore the simple name, in his own writing, "Philip Pendennis."

"What does it mean?" she cried out, in her passionate pain. "The heart fettered by chains of gold I can understand, but the one relinked I do not. Does Philip Pendennis mean to insult me? No. He would be compelled to love me still to take pleasure in that, and he must despise me. Not more than I do myself, however. Oh, God, it is horrible! For another's sin I have lost him, I have lost love, but, what is more potent still, I have lost my own self-respect. I am a thing which I have always abhorred; but I must forget."

"Stella, your guests are arriving!"

It was Raoul's voice which aroused her from her reverie before the flower-stand. She arose wearily from the chair into which she had sunk, and detached the card. She placed it in the bosom of her elegant gown of pure

* Love accomplishes much, but money everything.

white India silk and point lace, and went into the next room.

She found Ted Earlscourt and his *protegee* awaiting her.

The child was an extraordinary combination of street waif and refinement.

Her face was of the clear, cold, classical order. There was not a particle of color, save in the warm, tremulous lips. Her complexion was transparent, her features perfect, her eyes wonderful for their size and brilliancy and shaded by long, sweeping, black lashes.

Altogether it was a face which a less generous woman than Stella would have feared, but she never even thought of it. Navie Arnold was a beautiful woman, but when she stood beside Stella Brownell, one involuntarily contrasted them as they would an exquisite moonlight and the wondrous light of the sun.

You look at one and admire. It fills you with a nameless tranquillity. It sends peace to the heart and cools the feverish unrest of the anguished soul.

The other has been worshiped as a God. Its very name brings a thrill of expectancy to the human breast. Its brilliancy blinds the eyes. It makes our day and we love it, and note with regret its absence for a single hour.

So with those two, who met for the first time.

The one, dressed in an ill-fitting, heavy muslin, with an ugly pink scarf tied in an ungainly knot at her waist, the other all elegance, with her tasteful, clinging robes and marvelous grace.

Stella received her with marked kindness when Ted Earlscourt had spoken his few words of introduction and, taking her into the dressing-room, she retired the awkward sash and changed her hair a trifle.

There were only six or eight ladies present, among whom were several actresses of more or less prominence.

They were all enjoying themselves in their hearty way, with just a dash of bohemianism to destroy any stiffness, when the door suddenly swung open, and Philip Pendennis was announced.

He was dressed in the regulation evening attire, which so greatly became his careless, debonair grace.

He entered with his usual nonchalance, looking his

own calm, indifferent self, save for a trifling pallor which he could not quite control.

Stella was standing with her back to the door, talking with Earlscourt, when the announcement was made. Her face became ghastly and, for an instant, her old friend thought she was going to faint.

"What an extraordinary bracelet that is you wear, Mrs. Brownell," he remarked quickly, seizing her wrist firmly and bending over her. "Be careful, Stella," he whispered aside, "your husband is watching you."

"Yes," she answered. "It has, I believe, been in Raoul's family for years."

She spoke carelessly, giving him a grateful look, which he remembered.

"Awfully pleased to see you, Pendennis," said Brownell with suspicious warmth. "I feared you had an engagement and could not favor us to-night."

"A thousand engagements would not prevent my accepting your hospitality," answered Pendennis gravely.

"Stella," said Brownell, "an old friend of yours awaits your welcome."

There was a light in the steely gray eyes which Stella could not quite fathom, but she turned quietly to Pendennis and spoke quite naturally.

"Mr. Pendennis!" she exclaimed, as though astonished. "Is it really you? You must pardon me; I did not hear you announced."

She uttered the falsehood quite glibly, and Philip looked at her with a sneer upon his handsome features, for he had seen her start, as had also her husband.

"Indeed!" he answered, not attempting to conceal his scorn. "Mr. Delmonico must train his servants to speak louder. Glad to see you, Earlscourt."

"I believe you know us all except Miss Arnold," said Brownell. "Allow me to introduce you to her. She is some one whom Earlscourt and my wife have taken up, I believe."

"No doubt Mrs. Brownell is an excellent chaperon and a superior instructress," answered Pendennis contemptuously as he caught sight of the girlish figure pointed out to him.

Stella bit her lip, but remained silent.

Brownell led him across the room and introduced him

to Miss Arnold, bringing both back to Stella and Earlscourt.

"Supper is served," announced a servant.

"Pendennis, take my wife, will you?" said Brownell with affected geniality. "Miss Fern is alone, Earlscourt."

He saw that every one was taken care of, then offered his arm to Miss Arnold and led the way to the supper-room.

It was a magnificent spread, well worthy of the epicurean tastes of those gathered around the handsomely decorated table.

With a crimson spot burning in either cheek, which spoke more plainly than words of suppressed but violent agitation, Philip offered Stella his arm and led her in.

If her life had depended upon it she could not have uttered a sound. She glanced at her husband, but save for that impenetrable smile which troubled her, he was calm and serene, intently watching the girl beside him.

"Now that two such distinguished people as my wife and Mr. Earlscourt have taken your future in charge, Miss Arnold," said Brownell, with a heavy attempt at playfulness, "what are you to do? Submit blindly to whatever they may see fit to dictate?"

"With such a friend as Mr. Earlscourt has proved himself to be, and a benefactress such as your wife promises, I have no fears in submitting blindly. They will only suggest what is well for me."

She spoke with feeling, and mostly every one at the table who knew her origin and antecedents, looked at her in mute astonishment. Glancing up, she caught the expression of the faces, and her own colored deeply.

"You propose to put her on the stage, do you not, Stella?" asked Brownell, without removing his eyes from Miss Arnold.

"I shall try her in a small part," answered Stella, with affected lightness. "She is afflicted with an independent spirit, and is determined to earn her money by the 'sweat of her brow.'"

"You will soon learn, Miss Arnold," said Pendennis, leaning across the table and speaking contemptuously, "what a thankless task you have set yourself. If you pursue the course marked out for you by so wise and

famous a woman as Mrs. Brownell, you will soon hear Iago's instruction, 'Put money in thy purse.' The ways and means amount to nothing, so that the end is obtained. The easiest way is matrimony. Men bid high for beauty, and beauty knocks herself down to the highest bidder."

"You are an ill counselor, Pendennis," remarked Earlscourt, glancing pityingly at Stella's pale face. "There is no rock so safe upon which a woman can pillow her head, as a strong man's earnest love."

"Pah!" answered Pendennis, his handsome eyes flashing with disgust. "A rock is a hard pillow for a woman's head, and as for safety, it would deprive life of half its joys. Money is the motor which rules the world. Love a man all you like, Miss Arnold, or say it, which is quite the same thing, but if his rival has a hundred dollars more on his bank account, accept the rival, by all means."

"I will never marry unless I love, and love madly," said Miss Arnold, gazing beyond them all, with an expression in her great, dark eyes which was incomprehensible.

"That does not say you will marry the man you love," returned Pendennis. "It is all very well to talk of love, to play with a man's heart as you would with a pretty, interesting bauble which can be tossed aside when you grow weary of it, but don't be foolish enough to commit so grave an error as to marry a man for love. You would be ostracized from the society which constitutes the world in which you will be thrown."

"You speak bitterly, Mr. Pendennis," said Miss Fern, a woman no longer in her first youth, and intensely jealous of those who were. "Is it possible that some one has had the bad taste to throw you over for a wealthier man?"

Philip bowed, with a sneering smile curving his handsome lips.

"Is it not Coleridge who says, 'To most men experience is like the stern lights of a ship, which illumine only the track it has passed'?" he asked. "You see my experience has left such a brilliant illumination behind, that the track of life ahead is in shadow, and I still grope, feeling my way with my hands in front, while my head is turned to watch the scintillation of the 'stern lights.'"

"Be careful," said Brownell, quietly, "lest in your groping you strike against obstacles whose blunt exterior may deceive you, and whose corners may conceal sharp projections which wound and lacerate."

"I am invulnerable," returned Pendennis, looking Brownell calmly in the eye. "I have no need of coruscating lights to warn me of such tangible obstructions, nor have they power to deter me."

"You speak metaphorically," replied Brownell, carelessly. "To an obtuse intellect plain English is always much more preferable."

"From guest to host it is hardly allowable under certain circumstances," answered Pendennis, the hectic spots fading from his cheeks and leaving him pale as death. "But I shall be happy to translate to-morrow at the club."

Brownell bowed simply and graciously and turned to Miss Arnold.

"See, your wife has fainted," said Navie, looking across the table with wild, startled eyes.

There was a general movement, but before Brownell could rise from his chair, Philip had thrown his arm about her and carried her to a sofa.

CHAPTER IX.

Of course there was something of a sensation when Pendennis so quietly assumed the place of protector toward Stella, but save from a certain accession of color, Brownell only bit his lip and remained outwardly calm.

She did not return to consciousness as readily as had been anticipated. The entire evening had been too much for even her, accustomed as she was to excitement.

After Brownell had ordered her carriage and wrapped her in her cloak, she opened her eyes and looked about.

"How stupid I have been," she said, with a faint smile, as memory returned to her. "I have over-exerted myself recently, particularly to-night, and the heavy perfume of the flowers overcame me. You can't think how sorry I am to so dampen your pleasure."

"Do not be," returned Pendennis. "It is a pleasure to see some exhibition of feeling, whatever may be the cause of it. May I see you to your carriage?"

She looked at him, this man whom she had deceived for his own sake; she caught the fire of his dark eyes and had no power to resist him. If he had held out his hand to lead her to destruction at that moment, if she had seen the yawning abyss of eternal disgrace and eternal punishment open before her, she would have put her hand into his and walked into it, open-eyed.

But those moments do not last long with natures like Stella Northcote's, and Philip Pendennis did not realize the extent of his power or he would have exerted it, being only a man, nothing more nor less.

When he asked her permission to see her to her carriage, she bowed her head in submission, and placed a trembling hand upon his arm. But she feared her own weakness and turned to Navie Arnold, appealingly.

"You will come home with me, will you not?" she asked.

Miss Arnold assented with alacrity, and would have joined them, but Brownell gently laid his hand upon hers and drew it through his arm.

Everybody bid each other an affectionate good-night, and Brownell and Miss Arnold led the way down-stairs, the others following, and Pendennis and Stella bringing up the rear.

"When may I see you, Stella, and alone?" he asked, as they descended the stairs.

"Not at all, Philip," she answered, with a sob in her throat. "It is best, much the best, that we should not meet."

"Then we will do what is not for the best," he said, with a short laugh, ignoring her distress. "I *will* see you, but when and where is for you to say."

"I cannot," she gasped. "Oh, Philip, why are you so cruel to me? I am not worthy of one thought of yours. Why do you not go away, and leave me in peace?"

"And give you up to the man who has bought you?" he returned, cynically. "Nay, verily, I am neither so generous, nor yet so much of the milk-and-water type. You are his in one way, you are mine in another. I will

win all or there will be an account to settle between Raoul Brownell and me."

"Oh, Philip," she cried, passionately, "how you have changed! Where is that honor of which you have so often boasted? Where is that independence which would prevent you from asking the second time, what had once been refused?"

"You do well to remind me," he returned, bitterly, "for such as I am, you have made me. I love you. To you, a married woman, I say it, and I will win you or I will die."

As he finished speaking, he laughed lightly and handed her into the carriage. He raised his hat carelessly and without uttering another word, watched Brownell until he had entered, then stood upon the curb until the carriage was out of sight.

* * * * * * *

"A lady to see you, Miss Arnold."

Navie Arnold was sitting alone in Mrs. Brownell's elegantly-appointed library, when the servant made the announcement.

She started up from the luxurious chair in which she had been sitting, but with difficulty controlled herself.

"Where is she, and who is she?" asked Navie in a smothered, unnatural voice.

"She refused to give me her name, and is in the drawing-room," answered the servant respectfully.

Navie arose and dismissed the servant.

"Why am I so utterly foolish?" she whispered to herself. "She cannot have traced me here. It is some one else, probably Mr. Earlscourt's mother."

She calmed herself as best she could, but her step was unsteady as she crossed the hall and entered the large, gorgeously furnished room.

She closed the door behind her, and staggered against it as the woman threw back her veil and stared impudently at her.

"By Jove, Nave!" she said insolently, "you have fallen upon feathers again. What a rattler you are to gull, and how you do manage to drop feet first! Come here and kiss me—I am positively too tired to walk—and don't, for Heaven's sake, stand staring at me with those

big, supernatural eyes of yours. You give me the shivers."

The speaker was a woman about forty-five years of age, but appearing much younger. Her form was round and plump, her dress elaborate, her face rather pretty than otherwise, but made up to the last degree, her hair of the bleached blonde order.

"How have you managed to find me here so soon?" gasped Navie in a hollow voice. "And why do you persecute me so?"

"What a capital heroine you would make of a sensational novel, my dear! Don't look like that and speak in that sepulchral voice; it is horribly uncomfortable. And what an extremely disagreeable way you have of speaking to your mother!"

"Mother, indeed!" exclaimed Navie, her fine eyes flashing with indignation. "You gave me birth, 'tis true, but there is not a creature on earth who deserves the name of mother so little! What are you? Look at yourself! If you knew aught of shame you would blush to look your daughter in the face!"

"Very fine, very fine!" said the woman sneeringly, but looking at her admiringly. "You are a beautiful thing, my Nave, but you have shown little discretion in contrasting yourself with 'Stella, the Star.' She is infinitely more beautiful than you, and she is wise and shrewd, and will detect you under your guise of street waif. You are a wretched actress, my dear, and the capital education which I was foolish enough to give you will crop out. At the supper last night you betrayed yourself, and Raoul Brownell suspects you."

"How do you know so much of me, and where I go? I have tried for years to escape you, and the life you have mapped out for me. Only God knows how I have tried to change it all. I would be willing, to-day, to be the most hideous woman that walks the streets, for one day of innocence and peace. You have made me an outcast, you have broken my heart, and when tranquillity has been offered me, you have stepped forward like the fiendish incubus that you are, and put an end to all my repose. Oh, I hate you! I hate you!"

The woman laughed.

"How foolish you are to so exert yourself," she said,

contemptuously. "Why, you have actually got color in your cheeks, which is ruinous to your style of beauty. My child, you are what you are. Don't try to be different. How I laughed that day when you so deceived poor Earlscourt with your tears, your dirty face, and—and your untruth. What an unsuspecting simpleton he is."

A rush of color tinged Navie's pale face, even to her blue-black hair.

"What!" cried the woman, rising, and seizing her by the wrist, "you don't mean to say that you have fallen in love with that impecunious thing!"

"Silence!" commanded the girl, flinging off her mother's hand, as though its very touch stung her. "What right have I to love such as he? He is as far above me as the sun is above the earth."

"But the sun sucks up the foulness of the earth," said the woman, looking at her companion with half-closed eyes, "and goes on reflecting the warmth of his rays the same as before. But it shall not be so with you and your sun. I forbid you to think of him."

"What interest have you in me, that you should care?" asked the girl, pressing her hands closely in her agony.

"Simply this: I am accustomed to my luxurious ease, and I have no money. I am growing too old for men to supply my wants. They care for me no longer, but you must do it, and you shall do it. You have been silly enough to grow soft on Earlscourt's handsome face. Bah! Do you think he would marry you if he knew your history? Never! And I will tell him all—everything. You shudder. I was not wrong, I see. You, the honorable, would have married him, and kept the past as a sealed book. Don't try it. Too many people know you. He is not the sun, and you are not the earth. Brownell is your best show. I should counsel Pendennis, but he is too much in love with the fair Stella."

Navie had with difficulty held her temper, but as the woman's disgusting vulgarity found vent in words, her eyes almost blazed with wrath, and she pointed, with a passionate gesture, toward the door.

"Leave this house!" she commanded. "All my life you have drawn me down and choked my every impulse of good. You have followed me and demanded money, and I have obtained it by some means, to prevent you,

my own mother, from making known my odious past. But now you have run me to the wall. You, my mother, conjure me to get money from the husband of my friend and benefactress, the only woman who has opened an honest life to me. Pah! No words could express my contempt for you, nor tell you how I abhor you!"

Again the woman laughed.

"I have heard that so many times before that it has ceased to affect me. You do not want to return to me, do you?"

"I would die first!" answered Navie, with a look of withering disgust.

"Let me see," continued her tormentor, meditatively. "You pass to these easily gulled people as fifteen or sixteen years of age. Ha! ha! Capital! And yet you are almost twenty. That gives me more than a year during which time I am your legal guardian. Now, my dear, listen to me and heed me. If you make one move in this matter unsanctioned by me, I will force you to take up your residence with me; and I am not the gentlest of companions, at the best of times. You know, even better than I can tell you, what that will entail."

The miserable girl covered her face with her hands and sobbed aloud.

"What do you wish me to do?" she gasped at last.

"Ah, that is more like it!" said the woman, crossing her hands contentedly. "I thought you would be reasonable. I want money, my dear. I must have five hundred dollars."

"Five hundred!" echoed Navie, gazing at her in astonishment. "Where do you suppose I would get such an amount as that from, now?"

"From Brownell."

Navie's face crimsoned.

"Life with you even, before that," she said, with dignity. "I have fallen low, but never low enough for that."

"Five hundred, or I ask an audience of Stella and the enamored Earlscourt."

"Go! leave me!" cried the poor girl. "I will do what I can."

"Very well. I will be on the corner of Thirtieth Street and Broadway to-morrow night at nine. As you value

your safety, do not fail me. To save you annoyance I will do without my maternal kiss. *Au revoir.*"

She swept by the dazed girl and out into the hall, while Navie, overcome by her emotion, sunk into a chair.

"Now what will become of me?" she whispered hoarsely to herself. "I dare not tell any one. I could not bear the scorn and contempt. Heaven help me, I am lost again."

She sprung up and rushed out into the hall like a mad thing, dashing by the door of the library like a small whirlwind.

"Miss Arnold! Navie!" she heard a voice call.

Mechanically she paused, and, controlling her distorted features as quickly as possible, pushed open the door, which stood ajar.

"Did you call, Mr. Brownell?" she asked, in an unnatural voice.

"Yes," answered Brownell. "Come in and close the door."

She did as he bade her, and stood before him, trembling in every limb.

He looked at her for some time without speaking. When he did, his voice had a peculiar inflection which she could not understand.

"Navie," he said, "women are careless; my wife particularly so. She will provide for your wardrobe, but forget your purse. Here is a small check from me."

He handed it to her, never removing his eyes from her face. She took it in her shaking hand and glanced at it.

It was a check for *five hundred dollars!*

With a cry she started back, and the bit of valuable paper fell upon the floor.

"My God!" she gasped. "*You know!*"

CHAPTER X.

"KNOW what?" asked Brownell, looking at her with affected unconsciousness.

Navie pressed her hands against her heart in embarrassed silence.

"Know what?" repeated Brownell, never removing his eyes from her agitated face.

"I cannot tell you," whispered Navie. "I had rather die than have your wife and Mr. Earlscourt know. Let me go away without your informing them of my deception, I beseech you."

"You are speaking wildly," said Brownell, sternly. "Sit down."

She obeyed with the meek submission of a child.

"Now listen to me," he continued. "There is nothing for my wife and Mr. Earlscourt to know. You came to them as a street waif. If you are otherwise, that is your business, not mine. But I have a proposition to make to you. Are you ready to hear it?"

The poor girl nodded, being utterly unable to speak.

"You are in need of money; is it not true?"

"It is," answered Navie, hoarsely, seeing in his question another evidence that her conversation had been overheard.

"Very well; I am in need of a person whom I can trust. Do you think we can make an exchange of truthfulness and trustworthiness for money?"

"I don't understand you," said Navie, slowly, her handsome eyes shadowed with uneasiness and fear.

"But you shall, when you accept my terms."

"How can I accept what I know nothing of?"

"I will put it in another form. Swear to me to accept that check in exchange for a solemn promise not to reveal what I shall say to you."

Navie was silent.

"Your betrayal," continued Brownell, "cannot harm me in the slightest degree, only I had rather it would not be known, while—— Well, you do not care to have your past inquired into too closely."

"Speak! I promise!" gasped Navie, putting out her hand to silence him.

"In the first place, I love my wife, strange as it may seem in this degenerate age."

"You could not help it," said Navie, as he paused. "She is the loveliest and truest of women."

Brownell shrugged his broad shoulders.

"I have not much confidence in the truth of women," he sneered. "Those who appear most childlike and chaste are the ones who are rottenest at the core."

Navie's face crimsoned.

"You do her injustice," she said, in a low tone.

"That is exactly what I want you to find out for me," interrupted Brownell. "Before my wife and I were married, Philip Pendennis, whom you met last night, was engaged to her. She loved him, or I thought she did, and accepted me, presumably because of my superior bank account. I brought them together last night to test her, but I am not satisfied yet. What I wish you to do is to watch them. Find out if they have any stolen meetings; hear all their conversations, without their knowledge, and report everything to me. Will you do it?"

For a long time Navie sat in silence, thinking deeply.

"There can be nothing in all this," she mused. "The man is only jealous, and perhaps I can prove to him her perfect innocence."

"I would also have you note any conversation which may take place between her and Earlscourt," continued Brownell.

"I accept," cut in Navie, decidedly. "Your wife is as pure as an angel, and I will prove it to you."

"Very well," returned Brownell, cynically. "Prove it if you can. Now, raise your right hand."

She did as he bade her.

"Now swear to me that what you will report to me shall be the strictest truth, not one word, nor one act, more than is said and done, nor one less, and that under no circumstances will you ever betray me."

"I swear it," answered Navie, solemnly.

"That is well. If you break your word, the most minute inquiry shall be made into your former life and everything made known to the world. If you keep it, I will stand between you and any persons who may seek to harm you, and help you to a life of purity, which you seem to covet."

"You are generous," exclaimed Navie, seizing his hand and pressing it gratefully. "I tell you frankly that I would endure anything before making the promise that I have, did I not know your wife to be as perfectly innoxious as she is beautiful. I will be your faithful friend, as you have promised to be mine."

She picked up the check, and left the room with tears in her eyes.

Brownell looked after her with a smile.

"What a stunningly pretty girl she is," he ejaculated, mentally. "She has the material in her, and would have made a superb woman if it had not been for that mother of hers. But there is no redemption for a woman once led astray. She will have more to report to me than she dreams of."

He arose, rang for his coat and hat and left the house.

He stepped into his dog-cart, which was waiting at the door, and drove rapidly to his club.

"Brownell! Brownell!" shouted several idlers as he entered the door. "Welcome, old fellow. How is the fair Stella this morning?"

"I have not seen my wife this morning," returned Brownell, a trifle stiffly, "but she was well last night."

"When are we to lose her from the stage?" asked one. "I fail to see how we can ever exist without our divinity."

"She has no idea of retiring from the stage," replied Brownell, testily.

"What! And you will allow it?"

"Because I married a wife is no reason why I should suddenly turn tyrant," he answered. "My wife likes it. Why should I deny what is a pleasure to her and cannot offend me?"

"You are right, of course, if you can look at it in that way, but I should want such a magnificent creature all to myself."

"You would soon fatigue her and have nothing for your pains," returned Brownell, coldly. "There is nothing which creates weariness so quickly as too constant intercourse, and *ennui* is the death of love."

"Behold 'Benedick, the married man,' speaks," exclaimed the club man, laughing. "I say, Earlscourt, you ought to hear the old woman-hater talking about love and marriage. I move we make resolutions in which we request Brownell to write a 'guide-book for married men.' How I would envy his publishers the money they would make on the enormous sale."

"Good-morning, Brownell," exclaimed Earlscourt, joining in the laugh. "They are only envious of you and your good fortune."

"Their chaff does not annoy me," exclaimed Brownell, shaking hands with Earlscourt. "Waiter, bring half a

dozen of Pommery Sec. Come, fellows, we will drink to the success of the 'guide-book.'"

"There is Pendennis!" cried Earlscourt. "You are just in time, old fellow."

"Yes?" said Pendennis, raising his hat. "In time for what?"

"To drink to the success of Brownell's guide-book, which he is to write upon love and marriage," answered Rainford, one of the club members.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Pendennis, very superciliously. "Will you give statistics and prices, Brownell?"

A dull-red color burned in Brownell's cheeks.

"It will scarcely be necessary," he answered, quietly. "My readers will be men of too good standing in the financial market to be influenced by prices."

"Here is your champagne, Brownell," interrupted Earlscourt, wishing to put an end to what threatened to be an unpleasantness.

Brownell bowed and raised his glass.

"To what shall we drink?" he asked.

"The health of the beauteous bride and the virtue and loveliness of her sex," answered Rainford, gallantly.

"Omit the 'virtue,' and I drink," said Pendennis, harshly.

"What do you mean?" demanded Brownell, indignantly.

"Simply that it is not an applicable word to the younger generation of women in general. It is circumstances alone which affect their moral character."

Dead silence fell upon the group for an instant, each man pausing with his glass half way between the table and his lips, when Brownell, crimson with rage, his eyes flashing fire, dashed the contents of his glass full in Pendennis' face.

With a cry of fury Pendennis sprung toward him, but Rainford seized and held him fast, while Earlscourt threw his arm about Brownell.

CHAPTER XI.

"WILL you come for a drive, Navie?" asked Stella, drawing on her long kid gloves as she entered Navie's elegant little boudoir,

"I should be awfully glad to go," said Navie, springing up; then, looking timidly at Stella, she asked, "But will I do? This is all I have to wear."

"I guess Clochette has rigged up something for you by this time. You shall come, at all events."

She stepped back to her own boudoir, summoned her maid, and very soon Navie was dressed in a becoming toilet which reflected much credit upon the ingenuity of Clochette, and Navie's ability to carry a beautiful costume.

"You are charming!" exclaimed Stella gleefully, as delighted as a child with a new doll. "Now for our drive!"

They ran lightly down-stairs, and were soon driving rapidly toward the park.

"Now that we are quite alone, Navie," said Stella kindly, laying her hand gently upon the other's shoulder, "you must tell me something of your past. Nothing which you care to conceal, you understand"—noting the look of startled pain which had crossed her companion's face—"and nothing to which it hurts you to refer. I do not ask from curiosity, but if I am to help you I must know something about where to begin."

"You are right," answered Navie, slowly and hesitatingly. "There is very little to tell; it was always the same old, monotonous story of begging and beating."

"But your—pardon me—your education does not seem to have been neglected."

"No," said Navie, her face crimsoning. "I was taught some things, and studied much more on my own account."

"I am glad of that," said Stella contentedly. "Of course you read well, then. I was so afraid you would not, and it would have been unpleasant for you in the profession which Mr. Earlscourt and I have decided upon for you."

Navie smiled quietly.

"Yes, I read well and write well," she answered softly.

Stella looked at her long and earnestly.

There was something so strange and seemingly unreal in the girl's weird, moonlight beauty that it gave Stella an uncanny feeling, and she shivered slightly.

We never quite trust people whom we do not under-

stand, and a vague idea crossed Stella's brain that she was being deceived, but she was too honest, too loyal and true herself to believe ill of others.

"Navie," she said, speaking very slowly, "I hope you will pardon me for what I am going to say to you, but I think it a duty I owe Mr. Earlscourt and myself. He has taken you into his own family, and I have received you as a sacred trust, with scarcely a word of explanation regarding your past, without any assurance that you are what you represent yourself to be, save your own assertion. But we ask no more. Do not distress yourself, child, for you shall never again return to that horrid woman. What we do ask of you is that you be true to us in all things. Never, under any circumstances, deceive me, Navie, for a confidence once destroyed by falsehood can never be restored. If I ask you a question which you do not wish to answer, say so frankly, and I shall like you all the more."

"You may trust me," answered Navie, with tears standing in her lustrous eyes. "You have been good to me, you and he, and you are the only two on earth who have, disinterestedly. I may prove false to myself, I may prove false to all the rest of the world, but never to you, never to him, I swear it."

A divided oath. Which will be kept, the one prompted by gratitude or the one involving her own personal safety?

"I believe you," said Stella impulsively, clasping her hand firmly. "Forgive me if I seemed to doubt you; but, after all, you are only a child and have yet to be taught many things. Mayhap that is one of them. I have a most awfully disagreeable feeling upon me to-day, one for which I cannot account, and we theatrical folk are so extremely superstitious. By the way, we rehearse 'Led Astray' to-morrow at eleven. Your part has only about three lines, but you have an opportunity to look pretty, which you will do to perfection. Let us go home; the air seems murky, and I am nervous."

She pulled the check-rein of the carriage and ordered the coachman home, then leaned back and drew her cloak closely about her.

They were very quiet on their homeward drive, those two beautiful women, each busy with her own thoughts,

both turbulent and miserable and in direct contrast to their lovely faces.

They were aroused by a sudden lurch of the carriage, and a greatly accelerated rate of speed.

"What is the matter?" asked Navie, leaning forward.

Stella did not answer. It had dawned upon her that her new thoroughbreds were running away, and were already entirely beyond the coachman's control. She turned pale and pressed her hands closely. They were out of the park and in the streets, dashing along like the wind.

Men shouted themselves hoarse, many clutched at the horses' heads, but their efforts only seemed to more completely bewilder the frightened animals.

With strained eyes and tense nerves the two women gazed before them, realizing the precariousness of their situation and yet utterly unable to help themselves.

As they looked, a little child, awed by the mad rushing of the handsome animals, stopped directly in their path, and with its yellow hair flying in the keen, frosty air, its tiny hands raised high over its little head, stood motionless as a small statue.

"My God!" exclaimed Stella, her lips pallid, her cheeks blanched with terror, but forgetful of her own danger in her knowledge of that little creature's peril.

The crowd of men and boys stood petrified, stunned by the awful jeopardy of the little life, and still the child, looking like a small spirit from another world, stood in the way of those rapidly approaching animals.

The coachman had dropped the reins, his hands lacerated and bleeding from his efforts to arrest the horses, when suddenly a woman's voice from the crowd, hoarse with anguish and entreaty, cried out:

"My child, my baby! Save her, oh, God!"

As if in answer to her prayer, a tall, commanding form from the throng sprung forward, straight in front of the maddened horses, and, seizing the child in one arm, caught the bridle of the horses in the other. They reared and plunged, raising the powerful man from his feet, but he gave a tremendous pull upon the bridle which snapped, in two. The pole struck him violently upon the head and he fell, the two wheels of the carriage passing over his right arm.

Instantly the more infuriated horses made a terrible dash, but swerved from their course, they turned to their right and one of them struck his head a frightful blow against a lamp-post and fell forward, breaking his neck and bringing his fellow-horse to a dead stop, trembling and quivering in every limb.

Springing from the badly shaken-up carriage, Stella pushed her way through the crowd to the prostrate man, who had made so valiant an effort to save their lives.

"It is Philip," she murmured, passionately, seizing Navie's hand and supporting herself by it. "If he is dead, I, too, shall die. Oh, God."

"Be calm," said Navie, gently, "he is not dead."

His face was pale, his eyes closed, his arm lay limp and lifeless beside him, and upon his breast the golden-haired baby sat quite contentedly, brushing the dark hair from his forehead.

"Pitty gemplum," she cried as her mother lifted her up. "He helped Lily stop the horses."

"He saved your life, my darling," exclaimed her mother, fervently. "May God forever bless and prosper him."

"Amen!" muttered Stella below her breath, as she bent over him.

"Who is he? Does any one know?" asked a by-stander.

"Yes, I know him," answered Stella, in a quivering voice. "My home is just there," pointing. "Will any one of you carry him there?"

"That we will," replied many of the men, in chorus.

Stella led the way, and with what tenderness they could, the men followed, bearing their burden.

They carried him to the room she designated, and left him.

A physician was summoned, who set the broken bone of the arm and made a minute examination.

"You think he will live, doctor?" asked Stella, anxiously, as she bathed the patient's head with water.

"I think so, undoubtedly," answered the physician, reassuringly, "but cases of this kind are always more or less tedious. Both bones of the fore-arm are broken, which, of course, amounts to little, but he has a badly contused wound on the head, where the pole struck,

which is of primary consideration. I fear a little concussion has taken place, and the patient may be delirious for some time and may require careful nursing."

"He shall receive my unflagging attention," said Stella, a trifle hysterically. "He has saved our lives. It shall go hard with us if we cannot save his."

"He is a noble fellow," responded the physician. "I have known Phil Pendennis since he was a boy, and a truer or grander character I have never seen. I remember a circumstance which happened once, only a few years ago. We were all on a steamer going to Europe. It was the first time I had met the family, and I was already much impressed with the handsome, manly appearance of the young fellow. We had rather an uneventful passage and were only two days out of Liverpool, when, one day, a cry was raised that the little daughter of one of the steerage passengers had fallen overboard. The poor mother was shrieking wildly, believing with the rest of us, that she had seen the little one for the last time. The captain ordered a lifeboat down, and as the men were preparing to lower it, to our horror, we saw a huge white shark, not more than a hundred yards from the spot where the child had sunk. Its triangular teeth were to be seen gleaming large and white even under the muzzle which projected over the mouth, indicating that it was, even then, turning to strike its prey.

"It requires a long time to tell it, but the whole horrifying scene was enacted in a very few seconds. We all saw the child's deadly peril, but none of us were brave enough to go to its assistance. The sailors were lowering the boat, but they did not seem to be working with their usual rapidity. An intense, awful silence rested upon us all when, suddenly, throwing off his coat and seizing a huge knife from one of the sailors, Phil Pendennis leaped overboard. We were all too much surprised and shocked to speak; we only held our breath and watched. He struck out boldly, and, being a powerful swimmer, soon reached the spot where the child disappeared. It came up only a few feet from him, and with one stroke he reached it and caught it under his left arm.

"Meanwhile the shark had fully turned, its white belly gleaming in the sun. It opened its ponderous jaws, but,

quick as thought, Philip struck him a vigorous blow with the knife in the belly, and the shark for an instant disappeared, leaving a trail of blood behind; maddened with pain, the infuriated animal returned to the attack, but Philip defended himself and his charge valiantly, holding the child up by taking the back of her dress, near the neck, in his teeth, until the lifeboat reached them. I have never heard such a cheer in my life as went up when they were drawn safely into the boat. The poor mother was overcome by her emotion. She fell upon her knees (as, of course, steerage and cabin passengers were all one under those circumstances) and prayed God to bless him for saving her darling. She kissed his hands and told him a pathetic little story about the child's being her only one and the consolation of her widowhood. He listened to her all through, and when she had finished and he raised his head, I saw that his eyes were overflowing with tears.

"'——By Heaven! I never
Thought strength so glorious as I thought his weakness,
Or man worth envying till I saw those tears!'

"From that time I have admired Philip Pendennis for his bravery and loved him because he is a hero.

"There," concluded Dr. Haldane, "I have told you a long story. I hope I have not wearied you, but I always grow enthusiastic over that noble fellow."

Neither of the women spoke a word.

Stella was bending over him, all her heart in her eyes, cursing the fate which had separated them, and loving him all the more because of a woman's contrary nature when she knows that what she does is wrong; and Navie, reading her secret with those great, dark eyes, watched her in surprise and some alarm.

While they stood there silently, the door opened softly and Clochette entered.

"Madame, your husband is in your boudoir, and wishes to speak with you," she whispered.

Without a word Stella left the room.

"You sent for me?" she asked, as she entered her own boudoir and stood before her husband.

His face was deadly pale, his lips twitching violently.

"Why have you had that man brought into my house?" he demanded, sternly.

"He saved my life," answered Stella, drawing herself up haughtily, "and was injured in my service. Last night he was your guest, to-day he is mine."

"But many things have happened between then and now," said Brownell, angrily. "Since then he has challenged me to fight a duel, and publicly insulted you in a clubroom."

CHAPTER XII.

STELLA grasped the back of a chair to support herself, overcome by a momentary dizziness, but she quickly recovered her composure and sat down.

"In what way did Mr. Pendennis insult me in a clubroom?" she asked coldly.

"He said you were virtueless," answered Brownell brutally, rejoicing in his opportunity of wounding her.

Stella's face grew livid.

"He said that?" she asked unsteadily. "Are you not mistaken? What were his words?"

"He simply refused to drink a toast to you and the virtue and loveliness of your sex."

"And you?"

"I moistened his face with champagne," answered Brownell with a short laugh.

"And he challenged you?" said Stella slowly.

"He could do nothing less."

"You accepted?"

"Certainly."

"What weapons?"

"Pistols."

Stella shuddered, knowing Brownell's accuracy as a shot.

"But his arm is broken," she said hesitatingly.

"It will mend, or he can use his left. The pistols and balls will keep."

"Raoul, do you intend to murder Philip Pendennis?" asked Stella, looking at him searchingly.

"What are you talking about?" he answered roughly. "Phil Pendennis challenged me, I tell you."

"But you forced yourself upon him," said Stella hotly. "Why did you not let him alone? Why did you invite him to supper? Why did you seek his society?"

"Do you think I must avoid every man who happened to admire my wife in her girlhood? I wanted to be friendly with Philip Pendennis, and he repaid me by insulting my wife."

"No, you did not wish to be friendly with him," returned Stella, a deadly calm in her voice. "You did not invite him here for that purpose. Why did you not tell me he was to be there? You wished to surprise me by his presence into a betrayal of some emotion. Do you think I did not see you watching me? and do you think it increases my respect for you, or my liking? From the first you have determined upon this quarrel, and you have brought it about. Why?"

"Shall I tell you why?" he asked, his eyes flashing fire, his handsome face heavy and positively ugly in his anger. "Since you know so much, I may tell you the rest. Strange as it may seem in this degenerate age, I love my wife, but strictly in accordance with its teachings and principles, my wife does not love me. God! do you think I have not seen all along how things were between you and him? When I asked you to marry me, I knew you loved him, but I believed my superior bank account would outweigh it. I was not mistaken. But what did deceive me was that I could not buy a woman's heart. The hand is salable, but the heart clings to its first affection. Singularly enough, I have grown weary of the shell and want the kernel. Do you think I do not see how you tremble in his presence? How your eyes droop when he looks at you? How even his insults are as caresses to you? And do you think that man shall live? I wonder that I have not killed him outright."

"You were too great a coward," answered Stella, sneeringly. "You feared the law."

"Does the law countenance a duel? I am not a man to fear. When anything stands in my way I simply sweep it out."

"Raoul," said Stella, determinedly, "the duel must not go on."

"Who will prevent it?"

"I will. Listen to me, Raoul. You say you will fight Mr. Pendennis because you think I love him. It is not of my own seeking that I have seen him at all, but I promise you that I will avoid him and never see him,

never speak one word to him if you will give up this duel, which is simply a determination to slay him."

Brownell laughed.

"On one condition," he said, watching her closely. "Tell me, with truth, that I have been mistaken, that you do not love Philip Pendennis."

Stella's eyes fell.

"You see you cannot," he continued, with a short, hateful laugh. "Even to your own husband you cannot deny your love for this man. I tell you the man should not live if I had to steal up behind him and assassinate him."

"It will be nothing short of that. You know that you never fail with a revolver. It means sure death for him; possibly the same for you."

"It would grieve you sorely if I should fall, would it not?" he asked, sarcastically.

"Do not speak to me like that, Raoul," entreated Stella, showing some of the real misery which she felt. "It would indeed grieve me. Think, Raoul, if you should kill that man, I should carry it forever upon my conscience. I would be the cause of it, and the shame and guilt would kill me. Give it up, Raoul, because of me. I will do anything you like. See, I am at your feet"—kneeling at his side. "I have never asked of you a favor, Raoul, but I beseech you grant me this. Surely I have brought trouble enough upon him without this. Oh, my husband, spare him!"

He threw her from him with such violence that she fell heavily upon the floor.

"You call me husband and plead for your lover with the same breath," he whispered savagely, gnashing his teeth with rage. "I must be more than man that I do not kill you. What are you? Are you so lost to all sense of shame that you confess your love for another man in your husband's presence, and then ask his life?"

"You have done a thing," said Stella, contemptuously, "which, under other circumstances, would make me despise you; but I promise to forget it, if you will do as I ask. Think for an instant. You say you do this because you love me. Do you think that would increase my esteem or liking for you? I should hate you, and I

swear that I would never willingly look upon your face again. Now, what is your answer?"

"The same as before," he answered, standing with folded arms before her, his steely eyes glittering with rage. "That man insulted you at your own table last night, and yet you walked from the room leaning upon his arm. To-day he publicly insulted you, and you humble yourself to ask his life at my hands. Bah! You are worse than I thought you. Before, I believed you to be only indiscreet, not willfully criminal; now—you are anything which circumstances offer you the opportunity of being."

Stella's face flushed crimson and paled alternately. She drew herself up proudly, and looked him unflinchingly in the eye.

"I am defenseless," she said, with bitter scorn. "I have neither father, nor brother, to protect me when my husband chooses to insult me. If I were a man, I should knock you down."

"Why do you not try it, anyway?" he asked, sneeringly. "It would be no more than one might expect from a person of your origin."

"You wish to murder a man who offers an affront to my sex, and yet you speak thus insolently," said she, haughtily. "Truly, a man to love and honor. You have refused my prayers; now, I tell you, that this thing shall not go on. It will be my last resort—for I dread public comment and humiliation—but if I can prevent it in no other way, I shall appeal to the police, and have you restrained by law."

"No doubt you would go to any extent to save your paramour," cried Brownell, his passion at white-heat; "but I swear you shall not. I will find a way and a means. And now, I forbid you speaking to that man. I am your husband, and your master. I cannot have him removed from here, because it would create comment, but he shall be attended by servants, and not you. I wish you to remain in your own room, and neither see nor speak to him."

He left the room, shutting the door noisily behind him.

Left alone, Stella threw herself into a chair, and stretched her arms above her head, her face white with misery.

"Why did I ever marry that brute?" she murmured. "I could have kept my oath without that sacrifice, and saved myself all this misery. No, I could not, for I am weak, so weak, and I love Philip with all my heart; but there will be some horrible tragedy at the end, I feel and know it."

Her words were prophetic; but she little thought of what that tragedy was to be, or how it was to be brought about, else might a martyred life have been saved, and a flood of bitter tears have been wiped from a human heart.

CHAPTER XIII.

"MRS. BROWNELL, are you alone?" asked Navie, putting her head inside the door half an hour later.

"Yes. Come in, dear," answered Stella kindly. "Have you been with Mr. Pendennis? How is he?"

"That is what I came to speak to you about," said Navie quietly. "He is conscious and rational. He seemed distressed when Dr. Haldane told him where he was, and calls for you constantly. The doctor says if he can be kept perfectly quiet for several days he may avoid the delirium which he feared. He has gone now and left me instructions about the medicine, and says he will call again about ten o'clock to-night. Mr. Pendennis sent me to ask you to come to him."

For a moment Stella covered her face with her hands and remained silent, her whole frame quivering with suppressed emotion.

"Tell him," answered Stella in a strained, miserable voice, "that I am compelled to go to the theater now and cannot come."

"Why, it is not later than half-past five," said Navie inquiringly. "Surely you can spare half an hour. Poor fellow! He cannot raise his head at all, and looks so white and ill and handsome. It is a small return for the service he rendered us."

"I will go with you," answered Stella, rising nervously. "Come."

Navie followed her from the room and preceded her into Philip Pendennis' presence.

Pale almost to ghastliness he lay upon the bed, his dark hair disheveled, his handsome eyes unnaturally

bright, his breathing quick and feverish. One arm stretched out, bound in plaster of Paris, the other hand clutched spasmodically at the covers of the bed, giving him a helpless look, which went straight to Stella's heart.

"I am glad to see you looking better, Mr. Pendennis," she said, a trifle stiffly. "The doctor feared you might be delirious and all that."

"No doubt he would have been glad if I had, that he might have made a good bill for himself," returned Philip; "but you see I have no intention of trespassing so long upon your hospitality. I shall be removed to-day."

Stella bowed coldly, striving to conceal the pain his words caused her.

"You and the physician," she answered, "are the best judges of how quickly that can be done in safety, but I hope that you feel you are welcome as long as you care to remain. I have not thanked you yet for the service you rendered my friend and me, but I am grateful."

"You have no cause to be," replied Philip, shortly. "I did not know it was you, or I should not have done even what I did. My only thought was to save that child. I did not even see you."

Stella's eyes filled with tears, and she turned her head aside, but not before Philip had seen, with a sort of fiendish pleasure, how he had wounded her.

So completely does unhappy love change its object, that this man, who would walk out of his way to avoid trampling an insect, took a positive delight in hurting this woman, for whom he would have considered it a blessed privilege had he been called upon to die in her service.

"Why did you have me brought here?" he demanded, savagely.

"I did no more than humanity required," she answered, trying vainly to steady her shaking voice.

He smiled contemptuously.

"Do you always so consider the requirements of humanity? If so, your disposition has changed, and matrimony has benefited you, after all."

She looked about, but Navie was nowhere to be seen; and, as her wandering eyes roved back to him, a lump arose in her throat which almost choked her.

"Philip, why are you so cruel to me?" she gasped.

"Have you, to others a noble, generous man, nothing better to do than avenge yourself upon a woman as miserable as I am?"

"You are miserable, then?" he asked, looking hungrily at her lovely face. "I am glad of it. But I do not believe it. You have sold yourself for gold, and you have all which your weak, grasping nature craves. This is only another trick which you have learned upon the stage. I used to consider you a poor actress in private life, but you are the best one which the world contains. You open those big purple eyes of yours, you charm a man's heart out of his body, you make him love you until his very soul goes out in his mad idolatry, then, with another stroke of consummate art, you throw him from you and put an impassable barrier between you and him."

"Forgive me, Philip, I have suffered so," she said humbly.

"Did it ever occur to you what I have suffered? You were not even kind enough to accept that man when I was not present. Oh, Stella, you were bitterly cruel to me! That blow not only came near robbing me of reason, but life. I think I was mad for weeks, and only God knows what agonies I endured. I had such faith in you, but you destroyed not only that, but my belief in your sex. But I will have you yet. I will pay a larger price than he, and win you."

"If what you say of me is true, Philip, surely I am not worth your consideration," said Stella miserably. "Why do you not forget me?"

He laughed bitterly.

"Why? Because I am a fool and no longer my own master. Because my love is the only feeling in me which you have not killed. Because I do not wish to forget, and could not if I would."

"And for that reason you have been foolish enough to seek a quarrel with my husband. Is it not true?"

"So he has told you of that?"

"Yes. Philip, you must not fight with Raoul."

"Why not?"

"Because I wish that it should not be done."

"You fear for his life?" he asked contemptuously.

"No."

"What then?"

"For yours."

He looked at her for some moments in absolute silence, seeming to endeavor to read her very heart.

"You have deceived me once, for God's sake do not do it again. Is it that you wish me to live or to save him a crime?"

"Both!" she answered, finding it an effort to speak a word.

"Both of us cannot live. Do you understand?" he asked grimly.

"No, I do not. He has never harmed you, Philip. Only I am to blame."

"He is your husband."

"Is that his fault? He asked me to be his wife, as any man has a right to do, and I accepted."

"For that he dies."

"He will not die, Philip."

"What do you mean?"

"That if this duel takes place he will kill you."

"Then you will be troubled with me no more."

Her face turned very white.

"Philip, will you give up this duel because I ask it?"

"No!"

She pressed her hands closely together and staggered slightly.

"But if I entreat, if I beseech you——"

"It would have no earthly effect."

"Think what you are saying, Philip," she said, earnestly, going a step nearer to him. "It means sure death for you, for Raoul's equal as a shot is not to be found. You challenged him. Withdraw it, I pray you."

"Never!"

"Oh, what can I say? what do?" she asked, entreatingly.

"Nothing, absolutely nothing," he answered, firmly. "My hatred will find a means against Brownell, and if not, why then, I die."

"Do not speak so coldly of it," said Stella, her face convulsed with agony, "when my heart is breaking."

"Are you acting now?" he asked, raising himself upon his elbow, and looking at her scornfully.

"No, as God is my judge. I laugh, and glitter, and

smile, and the world says what a happy woman, but it does not contain so utterly wretched a woman as I. You have made me reckless now. Do you think I gave you up of my own accord? I loved you better than my life. Would I sell my life for gold? Oh, Philip, how little you know of a woman's heart!"

"What are you saying?" he said, a crimson flush of eagerness rising in his pale face. "I wonder if you know? You did not refuse my love of your own accord?"

"No, a thousand times no! I loved you wholly. I loved you entirely."

"What caused it?"

"I cannot tell you."

"You are deceiving me again."

"No, I swear it. It was a thing so awful, that had I accepted you, you would have hated me, and cursed me for my despicable selfishness. It would have been the seal of shame upon your life."

"You speak in enigmas," said Philip excitedly. "Make your meaning clear, I conjure you."

"I cannot; it is not my secret that I would betray."

"Stella, come to me."

He seized her hand in his own well one, and drew her down upon her knees, so that her face was upon a level with his own.

"Look at me."

She obeyed him, trembling like a leaf in a storm.

"Stella, do you swear to me that as much as you have said is the truth?"

"I solemnly swear it."

"Then answer me one more question: Do you love me now?"

She bowed her head upon his hand and sobbed aloud.

"It would be criminal for me to answer you. Philip, oh, Philip! will you give up this duel for my sake? Think of my agony and torture. I cannot have you die. Philip, I should go mad."

"I will give it up on one condition," he cried eagerly, his eyes gleaming, his breath coming thick and fast.

"And that is——"

"That you fly with me, Stella. O my darling! life is useless without you; I can forget honor, home, heaven

itself for your sake. I love you, love you! I cannot live without you! Say, my darling, say you will come!"

He extended his one arm and drew her passionately to his breast, kissing her beautiful lips as he had never kissed them in her girlhood, his very soul seeming to merge into hers.

CHAPTER XIV.

ALMOST overcome by her passionate emotion, Stella lay quite still in Philip's arms, making no resistance as his burning kisses fell thick and fast upon her face and lips.

"You will come," he whispered, his voice almost inaudible in his agitation. "You will forget everything but our mutual love. We will live for ourselves and love alone, and be happy, happy as the angels in heaven. We cannot live without each other, my darling. What care we for what the world says, so long as we are happy. There never was a man who loved a woman as I love you. What is your answer, my dearest?"

She raised her eyes to his and was about to speak words which would have forever divorced her body from her soul, words which would have destroyed the sweet, trusting innocence of her youthful purity and rendered her, if for a time contented with a guilty bliss, forever lost to her home, her friends, her conscience and her God, but the Father of the Fatherless, ever mindful of His own, had one by to protect and save, one who knew guilt from its sting and who knew sorrow from guilt's remorse.

She stood before them, her great eyes glowing like coals, her face pale with the ghastliness of a great fear, her whole being irradiated with the light of divine pity.

"Stella, my friend, my sister," she said, extending her hand and drawing her from Philip's arms, "answer, not as your heart dictates, but let the purity of your soul rise paramount and speak for you. Consent, and you prepare for yourself, in exchange for a brief season of happiness, long years of wretchedness and a misery which is not comparable to any other torture which the world contains. You lose the respect and ultimately the love of him for whom you make this terrible sacrifice, you destroy the esteem which every honest woman must feel for herself; you make of yourself an outcast, unable to look in the

faces of innocence and truth, and all for what? For a week, a month, a year of guilty pleasure, even then imbittered and poisoned by the maddening agonies of foreseen desertion, of cruel contrition, of loneliness, and desolation, and death. Stella, lay aside your feeling and answer me from your soul, is it worth it?"

The weight of conflicting emotions was too much for even Stella's brave nature, and she bowed her head upon her hands, and sobbed aloud.

"Can you think, my dearest," said Philip, laying his trembling hand caressingly upon her bowed head, "can you think me so unworthy of trust and belief as to doubt me in this? Am I so lost to all honor, think you?"

"And do you think," interrupted Navie, passionately, "that a tender, loving woman would hold a man through honor? When his love dies from want of respect, she is the first to feel it, she the first to know, and her heart breaks in the silence between his forced caresses, and the bitter sweet of honeyed words."

And still Stella spoke not.

"Do not heed her, my sweet," whispered Philip, tenderly. "What have our lives been worth without each other? Have we been happy? Have we even been content? I am like a reed tossed in the wind; I am useless, passionless, loveless, honorless. Without you I have no past, no future, no eternity. You alone represent hope, and love, and bliss. I ask for nothing, apart from you. I am nothing without you. And you say that you love me, solely and entirely. If that be true, can you not trust me, my own? I swear, before my God, to be true to the trust; I swear to hold you sacred, as a gift from our Father in heaven."

"You desecrate His holy laws, and blaspheme," again interrupted Navie, "when you speak so. Mr. Pendennis, you are a noble man; you have done a deed of bravery today which raises you above the common man; and we heard a story, later, which stamped you as a hero. Why will you not maintain that reputation, and not blast yourself with the most despicable of crimes?—stealing a man's wife while enjoying his hospitality. It was thrust upon you, you would say; nevertheless, you are under his roof, and must respect his rights. You will not listen to me now, but six months hence, when you have drank of love

to satiety, when the cataract of blind idolatry has been ripped from your eyes, then you will see your sin in all its hideousness."

"You do but prate," returned Philip, his face glowing with feeling, "and know nothing of which you speak. Let Stella decide for herself, and even you shall see how my acts shall give your words the lie."

"Let me tell you a little story," said Navie, standing before them appealingly, her small hands clasped loosely before her. "I will begin in the usual way and not take any more time than I can help. Once upon a time there lived a woman, beautiful to the eye, but with a heart rotten to the core—weak, grasping, and frivolous."

Navie paused and bowed her head for a moment, while a crimson tide surged into her face, but she recovered herself and continued:

"To this woman was born a daughter whom, as she grew up, men called beautiful. The payment which God extracted from the girl in exchange for her beauty was her mother's sin. Proud of her daughter, because she foresaw the admiration she would excite, and how she was liable to swell the exchequer, the mother sent her away to school, that her charm might be enhanced. Away from the foul pollution of the contaminating air, the girl learned to love purity for purity's sake, and to detest and abhor the vortex of sin and crime into which, even as a child, she had had a glance.

"Her education finished, she was ordered home, and then began a life of slavery and terror. She was barely sixteen, remember, and beautiful. She refused to enter upon the evil career marked out for her by those who should have shielded and protected her; but as in Eden, so in hades, the serpent is wily, insidious, and circumventive.

"This time he was in the form of a man, handsome, subtle, vile as the rest, but he disguised it under a mask of friendship, sympathy, and love; and woman, poor, weak, deluded tendril, listened and believed. He pitied her loneliness and the infamy with which she was surrounded. He wept with her over her parent's opprobrious life; he called her a 'robin in the nest of hawks,' and all the time in his black, foul heart he was plotting her ruin. But how should she know that, innocent as she was, de-

spite the wickedness of her surroundings? As women in happier situations have done, she listened to his pleadings, his vows of love, his promise of future marriage.

"Sometimes I think he did love her, because for months he lived in her smile; he showered upon her the gifts of his wealth; but the shelter of his name, she afterward learned, he could not give, because it was given already to another. Thus he plotted her disgrace, knowing he could never fulfill his promises.

"At last he grew weary of his burden. He saw another face, whose beauty attracted him, and he grew cold. With a deadly faintness, whose feeling is only comparable to death itself, she first felt, then saw it, and for the first time she awakened to the enormity of her crime. Oh, God, how she suffered! With the feeling of the expiring wretch who clutches at the frail straw, she endeavored to cling to the last faint ray of his waning love, but it was too weak! It struggled and went out, even while she clutched frantically at space.

"Then her love of virtue rose to a higher pitch than it had ever before known, but who ever extends a helping hand to such a woman?

"Men sneered at her tears, women laughed cruelly over her vows of reformation, the whole world turned its back upon her.

"Then her mother, after entreating, commanded obedience to her horrible, unnatural wishes, until at last, worn out with vain endeavors, this girl ran away. She hid herself from her former associates, and after months of misery and starvation, found a position as governess in a family. For a few months she was happy, with a fretful, uncertain, remorseful content, but the shadow of her sin was pursuing her, even when she dreamed not, and the wealthy father of the happy family fell a victim to the poor creature's cursed charms. The children and their mother loved and trusted her, and she showered upon them all the affection of her starving heart, when this new calamity befell her. Able to resist the man's advances without being compelled to leave the shelter of his roof, she still hoped, when the inhuman mother, deserted by wretches who had supplied her wants, appeared upon the scene, with a demand for money or betrayal in the event of refusal.

"I cannot describe the sickening horror of the girl's life from that time on. It was one long siege of terror and humiliation.

"To-day, standing upon the brink of despair and death, her heart filled with misery and remorse, she curses the man whose false love made her what she is, and detests herself for her own weakness. Stella, have you any desire for such a fate? 'to be loved a day and then thrown away?' If you are not happy, you have at least a conscience in whose face you are not afraid to look. You can open your arms to the world and say, 'My heart is pure, my life is clean.' You would live *for* love, you would live *to* repent, a thousand times more bitterly than the man in the Bible who lay in sackcloth and ashes. Now, Stella, what is your answer?"

"The cases are by no means parallel," said Philip, his face deeply colored with intense feeling.

"All cases of the kind are parallel," answered Navie, warmly. "Stella, will you not speak?"

"Before you do, my darling," said Philip, "don't forget to consider the happiness of my life. Forgive me for speaking before a third party, but the circumstances are unusual, and have been forced upon me. Have you the courage to spoil my life the second time? Do you care so little that you can condemn me to death or life-long misery? Oh, Stella, dearest, darling, I can never make you understand how much I love you."

"Yes, Philip, I understand."

The voice was so slow, so utterly void of passion, so monotonous, that it sounded as though proceeding from the dead, while her lips were numb and stiff and almost immovable.

"I know how great it must be," she continued, painfully, "when you can so far forget yourself as to speak as you have done. Philip, with all my soul I love you. Let my offense end in that confession. Do not tempt me, Philip, for I am weak and I suffer beyond all endurance, but because I love you I will retain your respect, if I can. Remember, Philip,

"'I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not honor more.'"

CHAPTER XV.

SHE turned from him and tottered toward the door, and Navie, throwing her arm about her with a protecting gesture, supported her.

"I must beg you to pardon my presumption, Mrs. Brownell," said Philip, coldly, lying back upon his pillow, and all the color receding from his face. "I forgot how useless it is to ask a woman like you to give up superior wealth and power to live in retirement with a man who loves her. I forgot that a woman like you could *speak* of a sacrifice and fail to *make* it. I forgot that you are

"—Fond, and fail, and false—in short, *a woman!*"

He spoke with bitter, cruel sarcasm, and Stella turned and looked at him. There was the dumb death-agony of a wounded animal in her magnificent eyes; there was a faint sound of a sob echoing from a broken heart; there was a moment in which even the trembling, outstretched hands spoke of anguish too deep for words—then Navie, knowing so well a woman's weakness where she loves, hurried her from the room.

"You have saved me, Navie," said Stella, in a hoarse whisper, when they were once alone. "May God bless you, and yet I cannot be grateful to you just yet. How tender I shall always be to women who have succumbed to temptations possibly as sore as mine."

She was seated in a chair, and Navie kneeled beside her, putting her arms gently around her friend's waist. She did not tell her that it was her own story she had told. Ah, if she only had, how much misery might have been spared her own suffering self?

"Stella," she said, softly, feeling a strange thrill of pleasure at her words, "may I kiss you?"

"As often as you like, for henceforth you are my sister," answered Stella, her voice trembling with emotion.

"You must come now," said Navie, briskly, to hide her tears. "It is time you were at the theater. May I take Clochette's place to-night?"

"I am afraid you could not replace her just yet, but you may come also if you wish."

Two hours later Navie stood alone in the greenroom of the theater, regarding herself in the long pier-glass, without seeing the image it reflected.

"Thank God I was near," she murmured. "She is so good, so true, so loving. It would have been the ruin of a noble life, self-sacrificing and generous. And how he loves her. Even his insults are the result of maddening passion.

"You here, Miss Arnold?"

The slow, careless voice was that of Raoul Brownell, who walked, with easy grace, to her side.

"Yes, it is I," answered Navie, turning and facing him, her cheeks growing white, as she remembered her promise to him for the first time.

"Where is my wife?"

"On the stage. The act is on. Is it not an unusual thing for you to be here?"

"Yes; but I was passing and concluded to run in for a moment. I am glad now. Have you kept your promise to me so far, Navie?"

"I have kept it," she answered, slowly, endeavoring to retain her perfect self-control.

"Well?"

"What do you wish to know?"

"Are you striving to evade? I wish to know if my wife has had any conversation with Philip Pendennis?"

"She has!"

Brownell grew white with passion.

"And I forbade it," he said, gnashing his teeth savagely. "You heard all that passed between them?"

"I heard."

Navie began to grow cold with fear. She dared not refuse to answer his questions, she despised a lie, and yet could she tell him the truth?

"What did they say?"

"He insulted her," answered Navie, hesitatingly.

"And she?"

"Did not reply to him."

"She certainly spoke some words. What were they?"

"Words of noble sentiment, and great feminine purity."

"And yet you said she did not speak."

"I said she did not reply to his insults."

"He spoke other words, then?"

Navie paused.

"You are trying to deceive me," said Brownell, sternly. "Don't do it, Miss Arnold, for your own sake. Now, tell me, and truly, what passed."

"I did most of the talking. She—she tried to persuade him not to fight with you."

"What did she say?"

"That you were an unerring shot and would kill him. She begged him, for her sake, to withdraw the challenge. She told him that she alone was to blame, not you."

"And he——"

"Refused."

"Did you hear—now, mind you speak the truth—did you hear her refer to any reason why she did not marry him?"

"She did not tell him."

"Are you sure?"

Navie drew herself up proudly.

"I am your spy, a person who has sold herself to a despicable calling, but I am not given to lying."

Brownell bowed.

"Your pardon," he said, coldly, but with mock humility.

"Was there nothing else?"

Navie was silent.

"Navie," cried Brownell, his passion rising even higher, "you are concealing something from me. Do you wish to return to the life from which I am striving to rescue you?"

She shivered.

"I am in your power. Believe me, I would never have consented to your contemptible terms, had I not known that she is as pure as an angel. I have watched her closely, and far from having my opinion changed, it is confirmed. Will that not satisfy you?"

"No; I must judge for myself. You must tell me all or nothing. Does she love Philip Pendennis."

"And if she does, what then? Can a woman control her heart, think you? Even should its object prove unworthy, even though there be a barrier impossible of removal between them, does it change her love?"

"You have not answered my question."

"She loves him, but she is worthy of all trust and regard," answered Navie, hesitating between each word.

She was scarcely prepared for the livid, white-heat hatred which seemed to scorch Brownell's face.

He turned upon his heel and walked away, making no reply to her words, his head erect, his arms crossed upon his chest, his teeth buried savagely in his under lip.

A second later he met some member of the cast, and was at once the elegant, debonair man of the world.

"Now what have I done?" said Navie, unconsciously speaking aloud. "What else could I say? I will be true to her at the cost of my life, and yet I must not offend him. She is as true as the stars, and if ever I prove ungrateful to her, may God forget to pardon me."

"As if you had any sins for which to ask pardon," murmured a laughing voice beside her. "Are you rehearsing here all by yourself, Miss Arnold?"

Her beautiful face crimsoned and her eyes drooped before Earlscourt's admiring gaze.

"Yes, I have been rehearsing, but I am unable to find out what line comes next, and it troubles me."

"Is it a scene from real life, from a drama off the stage?" asked Earlscourt, earnestly. "Perhaps, if you will read it to me, I may be able to assist you."

"I have no right to confide even in you, who are so noble and true. Mr. Earlscourt, you are an old friend of Stella Brownell's, are you not?"

"One of the oldest she has. I have known her since she was a child, and I love her as a sister."

"May I say something to you in confidence?"

"Need you ask?"

"No, I think not; and yet I hesitate, because her secret came to me by chance, and I cannot use it as though it were my own. She is in great trouble, the greatest which the world holds for a woman—an unhappy love. She is beset with dangers, which are all the more perilous because they are, to an extent, unseen, and even if seen are uninterpretable. You must be careful and on the lookout for her. She has no father, no brother, and her rightful protector is not her friend, as jealous men never are."

"I understand you, and will do all in my power to prove useful to her."

"Let us change the subject. It is a dangerous one here. By the way, how happens it that you are here to-night, and at this hour?"

"I have a night off. Am not in the bill, and came up to see Stel. She will be down soon now I suppose. Do you know Pendennis has challenged Brownell?"

"Yes. She knows also."

"Pendennis is a vile shot, but a rattling good fellow."

"Louise, baron, baroness," shrieked the call-boy at the top of his small, shrill voice, calling out the names of members of the cast.

"Stella will be down in a moment now," said Earlscourt, "but only for a moment."

"She is acting wonderfully to-night. The story of 'Frou-Frou' is something like her own," said Navie.

"Never," answered Earlscourt decidedly. "Nothing could ever tempt Stella Northcote to become like poor Gilberte. There is no such thing as erring to a woman like that."

Navie turned cold and shuddered.

"Are you so ungenerous as to condemn an error with no inquiry into the cause, with no consideration for the terrible temptation?"

"I might pity, but that is a sin which admits no cure. It is a sealed fate, and no power can wipe out the stain. 'Honor, like life, once lost, is lost forever.'"

"You are too harsh!" cried Navie, pressing her hands together convulsively. "What, then, does repentance and remorseful tears avail when the lips of mercy are sealed forever and hope barred out through all eternity?"

"You speak broadly and forget God. In that other world it is repaid with heavenly bliss, but not in this."

"You believe that?" asked Navie, trembling violently in her agitation.

"I do."

"You would then never marry such a woman, no matter how you loved her?"

"Never. I would never care to clasp her in my arms. I would tear the heart out that dared to love her. But we speak upon a subject which you cannot know any-

thing about, and I beg your pardon. I cannot tell why I have spoken so strongly, for the thing is rendered impossible, since with all my heart I love you."

CHAPTER XVI.

NAVIE drew back, an intense horror, beyond all words of description, crossing her face. A low exclamation of grief and terror fell from her pallid lips, and she staggered like a drunken man.

Earlscourt sprung toward her, his fine, expressive face quivering with emotion.

"What is it?" he cried, catching her hands tightly in his own. "Just Heaven! It cannot be——"

"It is nothing," interrupted Navie, endeavoring to force a smile to her chilled lips. "You startled me, that is all."

"But how pale you are!"

"Was it not enough to make my cheeks grow livid?"

"I cannot see it so. I had hoped it might bring a blush of tenderness, a light of answering love to your eyes."

Her head drooped.

The light in her eyes, could he but have seen it, was of inborn, passionate agony, but he could not see. He could only feel the agitated trembling of her small, imprisoned hands.

"Is my love so unwelcome a thing to you, Navie," he asked softly, "that it frightens you?"

"No; it is my unworthiness which frightens me."

"In what way are you unworthy, my darling?"

"I am so friendless, so ignorant, so poor, so devoid of any of the attributes which would make you happy."

Earlscourt laughed lightly.

"Is that all?" he asked gently. "I shall have none of your 'friends' to be jealous of; I shall teach you only what I wish you to know, and I have plenty of money for two, consequently your drawbacks are advantages. Have you any more objections to offer?"

She was silent, a strange, dusky flush coming to her ghastly face.

"You do not answer me," continued Earlscourt, press-

ing her hands tenderly. "Will you not tell me, Navie, that my love is not despised? Will you not tell me that you love me in return?"

She raised her eyes to his for one brief instant, all eloquent with suppressed passion and tenderest love.

"It is a weak word," she answered, with a sweet, tremulous, evanescent smile, "and a poor expression for an overflowing heart."

"My darling!" he whispered, his handsome face flushed with joy. "My own little one; and you will be my wife, Navie? Say it, dear one, that I may have the bliss of hearing the sweet words from your beautiful lips."

"Mrs. Brownell at last," gasped Navie, wrenching her hands from his grasp and springing eagerly forward. "How long you have been."

"You here, Ted?" asked Stella, shaking his hand, cordially.

"Yes, I was only just telling Navie I am out of the bill to-night. How lovely you are to-night, Stella."

"You will make me vain," she said, striving to smile. "The house is something beautiful—packed from pit to dome."

"As if you cared. I am afraid your heart is not in the house to-night, dear Stel."

"You are mistaken. Were it not for my art, I could never endure my bitter troubles. I pity the suffering of my character, and I contrast the usual nobility of a pictured woman with the weakness of the reality. I sympathize with her temptations, and I see how poor my suffering is compared with hers. These things have been, else they could never suggest themselves to the brain of man. A slender, cold house dampens my ardor. So you see I *am* interested."

"Good-evening, Earlscourt; glad to see you."

The speaker was Brownell, and for a few moments the conversation became general; then Navie found herself across the room with Brownell, though how he had contrived it she could never have told.

"Navie," he said, gently, "don't think I mean to inquire from idle curiosity into your affairs, but I think Ted Earlscourt asked you to be his wife, did he not?"

"Yes," she answered faintly.

"And you accepted?"

"Do you think so vilely of me? I could not so wrong him."

"You are foolish. Why do you throw away your life's happiness like that?"

"He would despise me if he knew. I have sealed my own doom. There is no hope for me—none."

"Why need he know?"

She looked at him in amazement.

"Become his wife and see him afterward loathe and detest me for my duplicity? Never!"

"You do not understand a man's disposition. He need never know; and if he should, his anger would not endure against his love."

How was she, poor, inexperienced girl, to know that his words were only suggested by his own desire? How was she to understand the hypocrisy of his disposition?

She was silent, and he paused to allow his words to take effect.

"*She* would tell him," she said at last, below her breath. "She would never let me be happy."

"But if I promise to buy her silence for you?"

"Why do you take this interest in me?"

"Because I do not believe with the greater portion of the world in condemning and giving no opportunity for reformation. I am sorry for you, Navie, and I will do all in my power to help you to a better life and happiness. You love Earlscourt, do you not?"

"God knows I do."

"Why, then, will you spoil his life and your own by this oversensitiveness?"

"I fear. You do not know him."

"Can I not purchase that woman's silence? From all else you are safe."

"Not from my own conscience," cried Navie passionately. "I would forever separate myself from peace and contentment. I would have my sleep disturbed with groans, my waking cold with fear. I would dream of the judgment which God keeps for such as I. I would tremble and shake in the sight of man, and even the spangles of the vaulted heavens would find voice to cry out, 'Traitress! dissembler!' Ah, 'tis horrible, odious, execrable."

"You excite yourself uselessly, and without cause. That feeling, if it existed at all, would soon fade away, and you would find consolation in a husband's loving care and protection. He loves you, and you reciprocate. Once his wife, your tenderness, your truth, your deep remorse will all speak for you, and if ever he should know, he will worship you for your very silence."

"No, no, you mistake him. He would spurn me, curse me, despise me, and I should die, if the world still contained a dagger or any instrument to kill. If I ever saw his eyes, which regard me now with such devotion, look with contempt upon me, that hour would be my last, I swear it."

He saw that he had an advantage, he saw she was losing her strength, he saw that she would not hold out much longer against his persuasion, when her own inclination prompted her to allow him to guide her, and he worked upon that advantage.

"One cannot but admire your scruples," he said, insidiously, "but it seems to me that there is a great deal of selfishness mixed with little love and less desire."

"It is not want of love, Heaven knows," returned Navie, in an utterly weary, heartbroken voice. "I would walk blind and barefoot over the whole world if I could obtain for him one day of happiness; I would place my life in misery, and degradation, and want, if by so doing I could purchase his contentment."

"Navie, will you listen to me? I am a man, and I know a man's heart. I come from a family of noble blood, on whose escutcheon not one spot or blemish has ever appeared. I tell you, I, who am accounted an honorable man, that there is no sin which my wife could have committed for which I would not have forgiven her, if she had come to me with truth in her heart and said, 'Raoul, I love you.'"

"You say so?"

"I swear it!"

"I will dare it. I will go to him and tell him all, concealing not one jot of my past life, and let him decide."

But that was not Brownell's purpose.

The course he had marked out for himself demanded an accomplice. He knew Navie's gratitude to and love

for Stella, and he wished to place her completely in his own power, where she would have no will apart from his, where every act of her life would be regulated by him.

And she? Poor, blind, hunted thing, how was she to know the blackness of almost every heart? the cool fortitude with which a man will wreck a life to gain his own ends?

"That would not do," said Brownell, seeming to think deeply. "You must not tell him. Will you not trust me, Navie? Why do you insist upon making yourself so miserable? I will see the woman you fear, and I will bring you an assurance of her silence. Will you not let me do one good deed in my life, Navie? Will you not let me save you?"

She held out a wavering, trembling hand to him, and he clasped it eagerly.

"You are very good to me," she said, faintly.

"And you will permit me to steer you through?" he asked, eagerly.

"The water is dark and full of rocks, the shoals are near and filled with quicksand. It is a dangerous experiment you undertake."

"I am not afraid."

"Navie," said Stella, crossing the room to her side, followed by Earlscourt, "Ted has just been giving me an explanation of your peculiar situation as I entered the room. He has asked you to become his wife. I am very glad for you."

"But she has not answered me," interrupted Earlscourt, a happy light illuminating his eyes.

"There can be but one answer to you, Ted," returned Stella. "Come here, child, and give me your hand."

Trembling and hesitating, Navie did as she was bidden.

Stella laughingly placed it in Earlscourt's strong palm, which closed over it hungrily.

"There, bless you both, my children," she said, playfully, concealing her emotion at another's happiness.

Navie bowed her head, and in her heart asked God's mercy and forgiveness.

The bell tinkled and the curtain fell upon the first act of a drama in real life. A tragedy loomed in the distance, rearing its hideous head, but unseen. The princi-

pal actress gave a little fluttering sigh and rushed away to prepare for the second act in her drama on the stage; the husband who would have his punishment meted out, congratulated them and followed his wife, and the lovers were left alone.

CHAPTER XVII.

"COME to me; I am dying.

"MADELON MARBLEHEAD."

With a cry of surprise, mingled with something like horror, Navie Arnold sprung from her great easy-chair, in Stella Brownell's boudoir, and reread the words which the telegram contained.

They had both been sitting communing with their own thoughts for some time, oblivious to the flight of hours, when Clochette entered and placed the yellow envelope in Navie's hand.

Quite mechanically she had torn it open, but her great eyes opened wide and a feeling of astonishment and some unbelief took the place of her sweet, almost peaceful smile.

"What is it?" asked Stella, aroused from her reverie by Navie's evident excitement.

"My mo—— the woman who brought me up is dying," cried Navie. "She has sent for me."

"How did she know where you were?" asked Stella, in surprise.

"I cannot tell," answered Navie, equivocally; "but she does know."

"You will not go?"

"I must."

"But suppose it should be only a *ruse* to regain possession of you?"

"How could it be?"

"You are under age, and your mother, or legal guardian, has a perfect right to you."

"Could she not come here and take me, if she so desired, knowing so well where I am?" questioned Navie, her face growing painfully red.

"I suppose you are right," answered Stella; "but you will not go alone?"

"I should prefer it."

Stella drew back in her chair, and springing to her side, Navie knelt down and placed her arms about her friend's waist.

"Do not be angry with me, my dearest friend," she said, gently, tears dimming her lustrous eyes. "I am in a most peculiar position, and the hard part of it is, that I cannot explain it to you because—because the—the secret—if it may be called one, is not—not entirely my own. But I hope you believe and know that I am not wicked or deliberately sinful, and that I will never prove unfaithful or untrue to you or—or to him. You trust me, do you not?"

"Yes, dear," answered Stella, kissing her affectionately. "I wish you could tell me all your life, it might be better for us all. I do not know why I should trust you, since you were, a few short days ago, such an utter stranger to me, but there is something about you, aside from your beauty and youth, which appeals to my heart, which makes me feel your purity, and which tells me that you would die, ere you would betray a friend, or prove false to a trust."

Navie bowed her head in her friend's lap, and the impulse which God sends us all, the opportunity He offers us to save ourselves from misery and humiliation and death, came to her. She opened her dry, stiff lips to tell Stella the miserable secret of her life, but she closed them again, she would not give up the few days of painful, yet sweet, bliss which were to be hers. She felt her lover's warm, impassioned kisses upon her lips again in her imagination, and she would have sacrificed all hope of an after life for the sake of the repetition of the sweet reality. For the first time, she had tasted of the honey of true and pure reciprocal love, and its very purity held her. The very remembrance brought a smile of happiness, of delirious, unthinking joy to her face, even in the presence of her unforgotten sin, and the opportunity was lost.

"You are good to me," she whispered, "very good, and I shall try so earnestly to deserve it all. I am happy, Stella, so happy that I almost wish God would take me now, before there can be any diminution."

"You have won the love of a noble man," answered

Stella, with a heavy sigh, "and I pray Heaven 'it may continue yours through all eternity.' I was happy once with a like happiness. My heart sang, the sun shed its burning radiance over my life, and the whole world seemed flower-strewn; but it all died in an hour, one little hour, and my life has changed from rose-hue to somber black, and an impenetrable mist of thick, murky clouds has settled before my vision. Child, let nothing ever come between you and your love. It is the one thing in the world which makes life worth living. It is the sunlight in the darkness, the pulsation of the heart, the heaven of earth. Deceive him in nothing, lest in the dim future the small cloud enlarges, expands before your eyes, and suddenly bursts, sweeping away joy and love and life in the mighty swell of its rushing torrents."

Pale and trembling from the effects of the mental vision which Stella's words had conjured up, Navie arose to her feet, kissed her, and hurried from the room.

She quickly changed her dress, replaced it with one of dark, plain material, and, covering her quivering face with a heavy veil, left the house on foot.

She pulled the bell of a brown-stone house. A girl in a French cap and maid's apron answered her ring, and immediately conducted her to her mistress' private apartment.

The room was large and airy, magnificently furnished in that flashy style always displayed by plebeian taste. The coloring was painfully bright, the *bric-a-brac* ostentatiously fine.

Upon a bed covered with silk and lace lay a woman in middle-life, whose years showed even greater because of the absence of the accustomed coat of *rouge* and powder which usually concealed the coarseness and discoloration of the leathery skin. The eyes were set, and staring with that glazed expression which precedes death, the bleached hair was brushed back from the high, almost bald forehead. It was so plainly the wreck of the dissolute, that Navie drew her wrap more closely about her and shivered.

The poor, lost thing held out a feeble hand and motioned her daughter to her side.

"I am dying," she said in a hoarse, hollow whisper. "Ten minutes more and you would have been too late. Are you sorry, Navie?"

Five eyes, growing so dim with rapidly approaching dissolution, were raised appealingly to the clear ones beside her, and Navie's tender, loving, gentle heart was touched.

"I am sorry," she answered softly. "Sorry to see you like this, more sorry when I think of the account you will soon be compelled to render to your God."

An expression of intense fear crossed the pallid lips, and a low cry of terror escaped them.

"There will be no account with God," said the poor woman, with a horrible gasping for breath. "I shall go straight to that burning fire which the Bible tells us is prepared for such as I. It is not the conscience, do not believe it, Navie, for mine is so seared that even God could not awaken it, but I can already feel the hot flames lashing me; I can hear the frightful roaring and crackling; I can see the awful agony of those indestructible souls, lost as I am, shrieking, screaming and praying in their dreadful torture, but the flames only leap higher in their fearful gambols, and the victims burn on, as they will forever. My account is settled with my Maker, and the infernal regions have opened to receive me."

"Hush! hush! you excite yourself," said Navie, laying her hand upon the distorted face. "It is not too late. God is always ready to forgive."

"If I could undo my wrong He might. If I could restore the homes to which I have brought destruction; if I could give back your purity and innocence and truth."

The beautiful face beside her grew even paler than its wont.

"But you will be happier, Navie, now that you will have nothing to dread from your own mother, will you not?" asked the dying woman pitifully.

"Yes, I shall be happier," answered Navie truthfully.

"Now that I am dying," went on the poor creature, her voice trembling and broken, "now that my sins rise up before me in all their hideous blackness, now that I see the accursed wrong I have done you, my mother-heart rises in my bosom, and remorse lashes me like the sting of a heavy whip. If I could only know that you are safe, safe from the life which has made of me the guilty thing that I am, God's plummet would strike me with less force."

"I am safe; you need not fear for me," answered Navie tremulously. "I will have a strong man's love to lean upon, a noble name to shelter me."

"He will make you his wife?" asked Madelon Marblehead nervously.

"Yes," answered Navie softly.

"Does he know?"

"No."

There was a momentary pause in the chamber of death, and when the woman spoke her voice was perceptibly weaker.

"Be careful, child. You have a double-edged sword over your head. Go to him and tell him, trusting to his love."

"I cannot," returned Navie heavily. "I would die before he should know. He would not forgive; he told me so."

"Navie, Navie!" cried her mother, with what force remained to her, "you are preparing some horrible fate for yourself; I cannot tell what, but I see the dark outline in the dim future. You cannot always live a lie; you will betray yourself, or others will recognize you and speak."

"Willard Sanford is dead, is he not?"

"Yes."

"Then whom have I to fear?"

"Where is Hallow and Caldwell?"

"They would never say a word, and besides I am never likely to meet them."

"You cannot tell. All sins, whether of your own creation or not, are like murder, and will come home to you when least expected."

"Then I will enjoy my life and his love while I may, and when he hears, there will always be a dagger."

"You speak recklessly, and forget the awful shadow of fear which will darken your love. Think of it, and think well. Now, open that drawer in the escritoire beside you, and hand me the gold case and package of letters which you will find."

Navie did as she was directed.

The weak, trembling hands received them, and opening the case, she looked long and earnestly at the pictured face it contained.

"I can hardly see it," she murmured. "My eyes are blurred and even memory has grown dim. Navie, there is the man whom I once loved and who loved me. Navie, there is the picture of your father as he was twenty-four years ago, even then in middle life."

Navie received the portrait, and as her eyes fell upon the face, she started forward and almost dropped it.

"Do you know him?" asked the once beautiful wreck, faintly.

"No; but his face is that of Philip Pendennis, grown older and a trifle gray."

"The face is that of Daniel Pendennis, his father."

Navie uttered a low, hoarse cry and started forward.

"What!" she ejaculated, vehemently. "Do you swear this? Do you tell me that Philip Pendennis is my brother?"

"I swear that you are children of the same father. Here are his letters to prove to you what I say. My God, child"—a sudden thought seeming to cross her numbing brain—"he is not——"

"Not the man I love, no," answered Navie, "but yesterday I saved him from the most dishonorable act that ever man committed against another. It is strange, is it not?"

"Very—strange! All my—strength is—gone—and the light is out. Read the—the letters. Navie—my—little girl—do you forgive?"

"Yes, oh, surely yes! but let me summon some one to help you. I have been so careless. Where is the doctor?"

"No one can help—me now. Stay—where you—are. Navie—my own child—kiss me good-bye."

Navie leaned forward and pressed her lips upon those beside her, already grown cold, and the weak, nerveless arms, with the last effort of life, clasped themselves about the girl's beautiful neck.

"Good-bye, darling," she whispered, and when the girl raised her head, the last fetter which bound Navie Arnold to the bitter past had been severed.

But alas, the sin of an evil deed rests and abides with us forever!

CHAPTER XVIII.

"RAOUL, may I come in?"

The voice, usually full, strong, and musical, was low and tremulous, as Stella thrust her lovely head of reddish gold into her husband's private room.

"Certainly," he answered, raising his head from some writing which lay before him.

He arose and ceremoniously placed a chair for her, gently closing the door after she had entered, and resumed his own seat.

"You are up early this morning, are you not?" he asked.

"Rather," she answered, timidly; "but there never seems hours enough in the day for me to accomplish what I have designed to do."

Raoul smiled pleasantly.

"Is not this industry a rather new and sudden whim?"

"Not particularly. I am teaching Navie now, and it takes a great deal of my time. Her mother is dead."

"What!" exclaimed Brownell, looking at his wife sharply.

"Did not she tell you? It has made Navie even more strange than she was before, and yet there is an element about her which demands trust and confidence."

"You are right," answered Brownell, a trifle relieved that Navie had not made a confidante of his wife.

"She plays to-night for the first time, and her beauty will make a sensation."

"You think so? It is nothing compared with yours."

Stella did not change color at his compliment, and Brownell bit his lip with vexation that he had so little power to move her.

"Is there anything which I can do for her to-night?" he asked, to break the pause which followed his words.

"Thanks, no, I think not," answered Stella, twisting a handsome ribbon which bound her gown at the waist.

"Stella, you have something to say to me. Am I not correct?"

"Yes."

"Why do you not say it? Am I such a terrible person that you can find no words in which to speak to me?"

"It is not that, Raoul. Philip Pendennis has gone."

His face darkened.

"Gone where?"

"Home."

"He is better, then?"

"N—no, I think not, but he would not remain here longer."

"After his recent behavior, I did not give him credit for even that much delicacy of feeling."

"I—I think you wrong him, Raoul."

"In what way?" he asked, stiffly.

"He is not so much to blame. Remember how he was treated."

"Have you come to me again with excuses for your old lover? If so, I must beg that you will pardon me if I leave the room."

"Do not go, Raoul."

"Then let us drop that subject. I have heard nothing else since my return to this cursed city but a whine about Philip Pendennis."

"I will never speak of him again, if you will make me a promise."

"But I will not make it," he answered, curtly. "He loves you and you love him. For that he dies."

"Who told you that I loved him, Raoul?"

The question came with such timidity, the voice was so low and unsteady, that Brownell scarcely heard the words and yet he knew they had been spoken.

"Bah! Every word you speak tells me, every act of your life betrays it."

"And if—if I should tell you that it is not true, Raoul——"

"I would not believe you," he interrupted, viciously.

She turned wearily away, and covered her lovely, quivering face with her hands.

"Of what use is it to become a liar and a traitor to my own heart?" she whispered to herself, "when I can accomplish nothing. But I *will* move him. He must not, shall not kill my darling, my own true love, not if I sell my soul to save him. Oh, Philip, Philip!"

"Raoul," she said, aloud, removing her hands, but averting her face lest he should read in her true eyes the

falsity of her words and meaning, "why will you insist upon it that my love is given to him?"

"I do not. You have told me so yourself many times, and it is the truth."

"Suppose I told you that I believed it once. That once I was foolish enough to believe he was more than all the world to me; but that of late I have discovered my mistake. Would you trust me, Raoul?"

For a moment dead silence prevailed in the room.

Stella, unaccustomed as she was to telling falsehoods, hesitated and stammered over her words, giving them an appearance of truth, which they otherwise would have lacked.

Looking at her flushing and paling face—not daring to believe what he saw plainly she was striving to convince him of—Brownell remained mute, his eyes staring, his face ghastly.

"You do not answer," she whispered again.

Rising unsteadily to his feet, he crossed to her, and, kneeling before her, seized her hands in a grasp like iron.

"Look at me," he said, hoarsely, "and if there is truth in you, let it speak from your soul to mine."

Calling to her aid all her woman's powers of dissembling, she made a violent effort, and lifted her eyes to his.

He gazed at her long and earnestly; then throwing her hands violently from him, he staggered to his feet.

"It is false!" he muttered, in a parched, hard voice. "I would give my life even to believe the lie, but I cannot. Do not try to deceive me, Stella, for I love you so passionately that it would make a madman of me."

She arose, and laid her hand lightly upon his arm.

"Then if that be true," she said, softly, "you will give up this duel for my sake."

"By Heaven, no!" he cried, shaking off her hand roughly. "You perjure your soul with the blackest falsehood that ever woman spoke to save him, but it shall not be. He dies if I hang within the hour."

"You wrong me, Raoul," exclaimed Stella, a shudder convulsing her at his threat. "It is not for Philip's life that I fear—it is your life and your honor."

He turned upon her like a wild animal, and seized her

head between his hands, turning it back until he could look well into her eyes.

"Now tell me that again," he said, slowly, his hungry eyes seeming to devour her beautiful face. "Tell me that you love me and not Philip Pendennis; make me know that you speak the truth, and there is not a power on earth which could tempt me to raise a hand against his life. Speak, but do not try to deceive me."

"I do not know what to say to convince you," answered Stella, a low, dry sob choking her silvery voice. "I can only tell you that I love you."

"My darling!" he whispered, his hot breath scorching her cheek. "Swear to me that I may be sure. I am skeptical, because it seems too good to be real."

Fearful of betraying herself, and to avoid the glad light in his eyes, Stella thrust his hands aside and threw herself upon his breast, sobbing her heart out.

It was the very consummation of art, though it was a stroke suggested by the fear of conscience.

"You have conquered, my dearest," he said, straining her to him passionately, and Raoul Brownell is the proudest, happiest man that earth holds."

He led her to a couch and sat beside her, and she allowed him to hold her in his arms while she sobbed on upon his breast.

She pitied him for the wrong she was doing him, for the hitherto misunderstood love which he bore her; she hated herself for the abominable part she was playing, and she loved Philip all the more, worshiping him with all the mad, unreasoning passion of a woman's nature, even for the sacrifice she was making for him.

"Do not cry, dear one," he said to her, as he lifted the sweet, tear-stained, drooping face and brushed the tears away with his own handkerchief. "Oh, Stella, if giving happiness causes it, you should be a contented woman, for you have made me frantic with joy! Why have you not told me of this before?"

"Possibly I did not know it myself," she answered, a little wintery smile crossing her perfect lips.

"You—you thought you loved him, did you not, Stella?"

"I thought so—yes," she replied, averting her face again lest he should read the miserable truth.

"How did you find your mistake?"

"By questioning my own heart."

"Forgive me, my own, for submitting you to these jealous doubts, but I can scarcely trust my own good fortune. I never hoped to hold you thus, Stella."

"No?" she questioned unsteadily.

"Are you glad to be here, dear wife?"

"Very glad," she returned, drearily.

"There is something in your voice which sounds so deadly cold. All the joy, and youth, and happiness seem to have deserted you. Is it my imagination, Stella?"

"Probably it is the reaction with me," she answered, endeavoring to invest her voice with a little animation once more. "I have been very miserable and laboring under terrible excitement, Raoul."

"I know, my sweet, and I have caused it all. Can you forgive me?"

"There is nothing to forgive."

"Stella—will you kiss me—just once?"

He asked his question with a deep blush; and hesitated like a schoolboy over it.

She raised her face to his, closed her eyes, and kissed him, with what resemblance to love she could summon, and then submitted to the shower of grateful caresses which he lavished upon her.

"There, there, Raoul," she cried at last, pushing him from her with a shudder concealed under a smile, "do not devour me, I pray. Now sit at a decorous distance and listen to me."

"Something must be allowed a starved man," he answered, joyously. "I will listen forever, but not at a 'decorous distance.' Go on."

He drew her to him, and laid her head against his shoulder, and she was glad that it was so, as it took her face from the line of his vision.

"I have a favor to ask of you, Raoul."

"What is it, sweet? Put it in the form of command, for I shall obey your slightest behest."

"We have never had a honeymoon, Raoul, you and I,

like other young married people. Suppose you buy me off from the Fifth Avenue, and let us take it now."

"Can you mean it, Stella?" he asked, scarcely crediting her words. "Will you give up your beloved stage for my sake?"

"Is it not as much for my own? I do not give it up. I only rest awhile. Will you do it, Raoul?"

"Will I? Ask me if I will avail myself of any precious privilege which Heaven sees fit to send."

"The end of this week, then. Now I must go. It is getting late, and I have much to do."

"Must you, really? How happy I shall be when I may have you all to myself once and for my very own."

"You deserve more even than I thought, Raoul, dear, and—I ask you to forgive me for a wrong I have done you."

Her voice quivered and broke as she spoke, but he covered her emotion with a kiss.

"Your dear love more than makes up for all," he answered.

For one moment she hid her face upon his breast, then she tore herself from his encircling arms and rushed headlong to her own room.

Once alone, she threw herself, face forward, upon the floor, and bitter, blinding tears streamed from her eyes.

"How can I ever bear it," she cried aloud. "Oh, this is horrible, enduring misery, but I will try! So help me, God! I will try to be a good and gentle wife to him for the nobility he has shown to-day! I am a wretched, deceptive sneak, and I hate myself—oh, how I hate myself! I have been false to the two who love me so, and doubly false to myself; Heaven help me! But I will try!"

And so she lay, sobbing and moaning, until Navie entered and found her there.

She had resolved, but can any good come from the pit of deception and fraud?

CHAPTER XIX.

"CLOCHETTE, you may go to Miss Arnold to-night. She knows nothing of make-up. Try how well you can make her look, and if I need you I will call you."

Stella stood in the center of her uniquely arranged little dressing-room, drawing off her kid gloves as she spoke, a coquettish little hat half concealing her low, broad brow, her lissome, girlish figure covered by long fur draperies. By her side stood Navie, a trifle paler than usual and, in the background, Clochette.

"I know you will laugh at me, Stella," said Navie, "but I feel horribly nervous. Suppose I should take stage fright!"

"Nonsense!" answered Stella, in her most business-like tone. "You will do nothing half so foolish. Remember your entrances and exits, get the business correctly and the words will come all right. The lines of your part are of minor consideration. There! go and get dressed. You will only make yourself more nervous by talking."

"Isn't it early?"

"A little, but it is a good fault. The first lesson of an actress' life should be punctuality. When an audience grows weary of waiting one must act twice as well to compel it to return to good-humor, consequently, only persons of great genius can afford to make it submit to their caprices. It is a thing which I have never attempted."

"If I fail to-night, shall you despair of me?"

"No. I am glad to see you nervous. It shows a sensibility of responsibility which novices rarely ever recognize. It is a great thing not to thrust ignorance upon an intellectual audience without fear and trembling, and the very weakness is appreciated; but never let it be so marked as to mar your performance."

Navie smiled a trifle wistfully and turned aside.

"I should like to be a success for—for Mr. Earlscourt's sake. I shall try very hard——"

"And will succeed," interrupted Stella. "By the way, has Ted told you that he thinks of giving up Barrett for me next season? In the meantime I am going to take a rest and a little fly to Europe."

"He told me—yes. But what will I ever do without you?"

"Tut! You will have him and forget me. When does your marriage take place?"

"He insists upon next week. But it seems so sudden to me."

"Foolish girl! Why not next week? There is nothing to prevent."

"No, I suppose not, but—I—I am so afraid he may be sorry."

"Nonsense! What about yourself? Go and dress yourself and don't talk foolishly."

She kissed Navie affectionately, then taking her by the shoulders, put her gently from the room.

"Go, and don't come back to me until the act is called, unless you want something particularly," she called after her pleasantly.

Returning to her room she closed her door, which gave forth a little click as the spring-lock snapped, but she paid no heed, and turned to a contemplation of her perfect face in the mirror.

"I wonder," she whispered to the beautiful vision which it reflected, "if there is another woman in all the world who is so miserable as you. The living, breathing lie of my life has begun and must be lived through. It is for his sake, all for his sake. If I could only die; but I am too weak to take my life by my own hand, and unless we are the agent, death does not come at our command. Poor Raoul! If I could only love him as he loves me we might be happy; but I cannot, I cannot! The touch of his hand is like a lump of clay, the clasp of his arm is like the twisting of a serpent's coils, and a kiss from his lips sends a shiver of deadly dread over me. But I will be true! So help me Heaven, I will hide my repulsion and be a good, true wife to him."

She removed her heavy wrap and her hat, standing once more before the mirror, the shimmering folds of her rich, dark dress contrasting well with the red gold of her bright hair.

As she stood, a gentle knock sounded upon the door. She opened it, and, before she could recover from her surprise, Philip Pendennis entered and closed the door behind him.

"You—here!" she gasped. "Why have you ventured from your room to-night?"

"Because I should have died if I had remained there, and I am not ready for that yet. I thought I should find

you here, and alone, and I told the fellow at the back door that I had an important message for you. A little consideration of a few dollars got me in fast enough."

"Oh, Philip, why have you come? Am I not wretched enough without your adding to it more?"

"I have come for your promise to go away with me."

"And I cannot give it."

"Do you think that will deter me? You have confessed that you loved me, that it was not your own will which parted us, and now you shall be my own."

"Oh, Philip, why are you so cruel to me?"

"I am not. It is you who are cruel. I love you with my whole heart and soul, and will never give you up. Do you hear me? Never! Surely, Stella, you have caused me suffering enough. I am a miserable wreck of my former self. Look at me. Can you see your own work calmly and still refuse to come with me?"

"I can, because I must."

"You cannot, must not, *shall* not!"

"Think what it is you offer me, Philip," she cried out, passionately. "Shame and disgrace, and remorse and eternal punishment."

"Not so. I offer you contentment and joy and bliss. I offer you a life's devotion. I offer you love."

She trembled as she listened to his impassioned appeal, to the unsteady tones of his slow, musical voice, and her heart beat to suffocation as she noted the depth of tenderness in his darkly handsome eyes.

For a single instant the reserve with which she had surrounded herself gave way, and she half extended her arms, but they quickly fell again, and she turned from him and laughed. It was a low, mirthless laugh, which told more truly of a breaking heart than scores of words could have done, but in his pain he only heard the sound, and a flame of anger leapt into his burning eyes.

"You do well to laugh," he said, with a cold sneer. "For the second time you have shown your power over your victim. If it is a satisfaction to you to know that you have ruined me, body and soul, you have it. Look, and behold the bleeding, tortured heart, with all its throbs and agonies."

"Philip, Philip, you wrong me. Cannot you see how I suffer? Why will you not have mercy and leave me?"

"I cannot! You know the old story, almost as old as love itself, of the moth and the candle. Has the needle power to resist the magnet? Cure me of my love and I will leave you. Make me hate you, and I will bless you, but you cannot. I shall love you until the 'leaves of the judgment-book unfold,' and after, long afterward. I am a madman, Stella, and you have made me so. Am I the same who sat in a little room like this, only a few short months ago, and demanded with such laughing nonchalance that you be my wife? Gods! When I think of the centuries of enduring grief and torture that have rolled between me and my heart since then, I wonder that I live. Then I believed your eyes to be true as the stars. I looked into them and read that you loved me. Weak fool that I was! My whole heart went out and bound itself in yours until now—now, oh, Stella, darling, if you have no love for me, have pity, for I cannot live and live without you!"

In his utter abandonment to grief, this noble man, this hero, leaned his head upon his arm which leaned against the wall, and sobbed aloud.

And Stella?

For one moment she regarded him, then seeming to lose all control of her own acts, she sprung forward and seized his arm.

"Don't do that!" she murmured in a low, hushed voice.

Quick as thought he wheeled round and caught her in his strong arms. Powerless to resist, she did not even struggle, but gave herself up to the guilty sweetness of his love.

He pressed her to him with passionate earnestness and murmured words of tenderest endearment.

"You are mine," he whispered, with his lips upon her own. "My dearest, my only love, nothing can separate us now. We will forget the world, forget all but our love, our happiness, and our joy."

But the sound of his voice restored her wandering conscience, and even in the midst of her love, she saw how false she was to her every vow; but alas, how true to the dictates of her own weak, loving heart!

And even while she listened, she grew strong again, and her love for him outweighed her selfishness. She

remembered what men would say of him; she thought of his exile from his parents and home; she saw the opprobrium which his act would cast upon an honorable name, and she drew back—back from the encircling arms which held her fast, back from his burning caresses.

"Philip, release me!" she cried, hoarsely, dropping her arms from his neck. "This is mockery, madness. I can never be more to you than I am now. You forget what is due me as a woman and a wife. You force me to respect myself since you will not do so. Release me, I command you."

His arm dropped from her as she spoke her last words as though suddenly relieved of chains. He stepped back a pace and looked at her, as with hanging head and drooping eyes she stood before him.

"You can never be more to me than you now are," he repeated, monotonously. "Listen to me, Stella! I am not a man who speaks lightly, or talks for the sake of talking, but I always keep my word. I tell you that you *shall* be mine. There is no power upon this earth which can keep you from me, except you tell me with your own lips that you love this man who calls you wife. Now speak these words if you can."

For a moment she hesitated; then, raising to his a face all alight with sacrificing devotion, she murmured the words with plaintive misery.

"You are right, Philip, I love him!"

Like one stricken with sudden death he stood before her, no muscle of his stern, cold face moving, his warm, eager eyes grown strangely dim and set, the very breath seeming frozen upon his lips.

And she was frightened.

She went to him, and, laying her hands upon his shoulders, shook him, but still he only looked at her with that strangely glazed eye. Then, fearing that she had killed him, all the tenderness of her nature bubbled to the surface and choked out every other thought, and she raised herself upon her toes and kissed him.

It awakened him from the lethargy which had enveloped him, and he thrust her from him as though she had been a poisonous thing.

"Traitoress! Murderess!" he hissed. "You are accountable for the death of a soul, as well as for a life."

Faint and livid, he turned to leave the room, but at the same moment a quick, eager knock sounded upon the door, and the knob of the locked door turned.

"Open the door, Stella," cried her husband's voice from the outside. "I have something to say to you. It is I, Raoul, dear."

With a face blanched with terror, Stella flung herself in Philip's way as he advanced to open the door.

"You must not! It means death!" she gasped.

"Never mind your dress, darling. It is something of importance. Open the door quickly," again called out her husband's eager voice.

CHAPTER XX.

It was not for her own life that Stella feared, neither her life, nor her happiness, nor her honor, but she knew that this thing, which she would have sacrificed her existence to prevent, could no longer be averted. It was a terrible moment to her, frightful, appalling.

And he, the man she loved better than her own soul, stood there beside her, his face set and cold, his eyes stern and unyielding, while Nemesis awaited outside that frail door.

"Conceal yourself, Philip," she whispered, frantically. "For my sake. Quick! quick!"

And he—laughed.

It was such a hard, mirthless, grewsome laugh that she could scarcely recognize it as his own. The lips were strained and white, and into the handsome eyes there grew a cruel, demoniacal look, which destroyed all the debonair beauty of his Grecian face.

"From him!" he exclaimed, mockingly. "Open the door, and let him see how the wife *who loves him* is locked in the room with the man whom she despises."

"I cannot," she gasped. "He will kill you, and you have no power to defend yourself."

She touched his right arm, which he carried in a sling, as she spoke, but the look of mocking fury only deepened in his eyes.

"So much the better for you," he answered, scornfully. "There will be no danger for the man you love. He will be safe, you need have no fear."

"Stella, open the door!"

The voice outside had grown stern now. There was none of the appealing tenderness which had characterized it before, and the very change brought an additional pang of mortal dread to Stella's heart, and also brought to her, with overwhelming force, an increased knowledge of her mad, idolatrous love for the man who stood before her.

"It is for you I fear, Philip," she whispered, passionately. "Only for you. Oh, my love, have mercy upon yourself and me!"

A change, quicker than a flash of lightning, crossed Philip's face. A spot of flaming red burned in his cheeks, his lips twitched convulsively, his eyes were ablaze with fire.

With his left hand he seized her in a grasp like iron, and drew her close to him.

"Listen to me," he whispered hoarsely. "I am a madman, lost to all sense of right, of justice, and of honor. Every feeling within me is dead, save that scorching, seething love for you which has parched and blistered my very soul. Promise me that you will leave the country with me, that you will follow where I lead, and I will save myself; otherwise I stay where I am and endure the consequences. What is your answer? Quick!"

"Stella!"—the voice outside had grown awful in its tense earnestness—"open the door at once or I shall break it in."

As if to give force to his words, Brownell shook the door violently, showing how easily his threat might be put into execution, and Stella closed her eyes, trembling visibly.

"Speak quickly!" whispered Philip.

"I promise," panted Stella.

"Swear!" he commanded.

"I swear," answered Stella solemnly.

"My love, my own!"

He pressed one mad, delirious kiss upon her perfect lips, then sprung to the sill of the window, which was several feet from the ground outside. With a superhuman effort he wrenched one of the already loosened bars

from its hold and sprung through, swinging himself off and dropping easily to the ground.

"Once more, Stella, I command you to open this door."

This time the voice was not disobeyed, but, controlling her nervous tremors, Stella unlocked the door.

Upon the threshold stood her husband, his face bloodless, his steely gray eyes black with rage.

"What is the matter with you, Raoul?" demanded his wife innocently. "You frightened the life out of me."

He stepped inside and closed the door behind him, then turned upon her with an expression of ferocity which made her quail, though she looked unflinchingly in his face.

From the top of her lovely nimbus-crowned head to the tip of her dainty toe, Stella Northcote was an actress when upon the stage, and now Stella Brownell called to her aid every expression of her art which she held at command.

"Who was in this room with you?" he asked, seizing her roughly by the wrist.

"Of what are you speaking?" she asked haughtily, drawing her supple, lithe figure to its full height.

"I heard voices," he answered angrily. "Don't try to cheat me. They were those of a woman and man."

"Does it strike you," said Stella coldly, "that you are insulting me? The dressing-room of a theater is scarcely the place for a married woman to receive her male acquaintances."

"You have not answered me."

"Neither shall I," returned Stella with marked hauteur. "When my husband chooses to insult me, he must receive his answers to any questions he may ask from the person whom he chooses to connect with me. Will you be good enough to release my arm?"

"By Heaven! if I thought that Philip Pendennis——"

He paused, his eyes gleaming with such fierce hatred that Stella involuntarily shuddered.

Then her mood changed to seductive sweetness, and she looked reproachfully at him.

"That again," she murmured gently. "Oh, Raoul!"

She leaned against the wall and half drooped her long

lashes over her purple eyes, her lips were half opened, her arms partially extended, then dropped at her side.

Her tone, her manner, her wondrous beauty all told with him, as she had meant they should, and he sunk into a chair, covering his face with his hands.

"I am a fool," he muttered; "a base, ignoble fool."

She saw the advantage she had gained, and stepping to his side, she passed her arm around his neck and pressed one soft, pink palm upon his lips.

"You must not say that," she said gently. "You are nothing of the kind. You are better and nobler than I ever thought you"— her voice breaking a little over her falsehood—"but just a very little bit over-jealous."

"And you are generous to forgive me, but—but whose voice was it, Stella?"

All the anger had died from his face, and when it was lifted to hers, as he caught the little hand and held it around his neck, it was lighted only with passionate love, so fierce as to be almost unholy.

She shrunk from him as if he had struck her, but quickly recovering herself, she raised his face in her hand and bent over him until her perfumed breath played upon his face, intoxicating him with its divine sweetness.

"Your lack of confidence gives your love the lie and baffles my unusually quick insight into human nature. You do not love me," she murmured in a soft, purring fashion which he had never heard her use before, but which was infinitely becoming to the glory of the beauty which surrounded her.

"Not love you," he repeated fatuously. "I am a slave, a bondsman. Your power over me is unlimited. A caressing word from you changes me from a revengeful fiend to an imbecilitated lover, with no will save that of his mistress. My lips are dead to kisses, save those you press upon them; my ears are deaf to sound, save words which you would have me hear; my eyes are blind, save to your charms. I have no belief, no will, no life apart from you, however illusory all your words may prove."

"Oh, Raoul, what a speech to spoil with one word!" she said, drawing back from him with a gesture of reproach. "Illusory! oh, fie!"

"Forgive the word," he said gently, "and accept the

meaning. You said I did not love you; you are my ruling power, my goddess."

"What is it that the Bible says about setting up false images?" asked Stella, with a short laugh.

"Are you false?"

The question came to her so suddenly, so unexpectedly, that it brought home to her, with the strangest shock she ever felt, all her falsity of the last few days, and a look of horror burned in the lovely eyes, but she forced herself to answer lightly.

"In the way of an idol, I suppose I am a 'false image.' The best of us would be, would we not? And I am not 'the best,' only one of the frailest and weakest. But—but you have not told me why you were in so violent a hurry just now."

His eyes darkened momentarily, but it all faded as she stooped forward and kissed him upon the lips.

"It was to tell you," he answered, drawing her as closely in his arms as she would allow, "that I am very sure I shall be able to effect your release by the end of the week, and we will have a long, joyful rest together."

He paused, waiting for her to express a pleasure he had a right to expect to hear.

"Are you glad, Stella?" he asked, with half-pained surprise in his voice.

"Very," she answered softly.

"Then why did you not speak?"

"I can never think of anything to say, under certain circumstances."

And this was one of the "circumstances" with a vengeance.

What was she to say? what do?

For a single instant the position in which she was placed thrust itself before her conscience-eyes, but she put it from her with terror, already with remorse.

"My pet," he whispered, pressing his lips to the soft, clustering curls of golden hair, "I never thought to hold you in my arms like this. How grateful I should be."

"Overture!"

The non-dulcet-like strains of the call-boy's voice awoke Brownell from a heavenly dream under a upas-tree in a fool's paradise, and relieved Stella from a posi-

tion, hateful beyond measure, to her truth-loving disposition.

"What!" she cried, springing up with hurried grace. "The overture rung in and not one thing done. Go, Raoul, quickly, and tell them I have been detained and have not begun to dress. Send Clochette to me, she is with Navie."

Without giving him time for another word or caress, she pushed him from the room and quickly began removing her street clothes.

"Thank God, that is over!" she exclaimed to herself, as she hurried on with her toilet. "But where is it to end? I am cold, cold with apprehension and fear. I have wound about myself a net of artifice and *finesse* whose meshes have entrapped me, until I see no means of escape. If I break the bonds which hold me, my own soul is lost and his life and honor are gone. I have only bungled in my efforts. My deception has turned against myself, and I am hemmed in, by my own blindness, on every side. I can see nothing, I can put out my hand and touch no tangible object which can help me. I can only raise my voice and cry out in the darkness. Oh, Lord! oh, God! have pity and help me!"

CHAPTER XXI.

"PHILIP, what ails you?"

The question was put by Mrs. Daniel Pendennis to her son as he entered her boudoir the following morning in such a state of exuberant joy as she had never seen him exhibit before.

A bright hectic spot burned in either cheek, his eyes were dancing with a brilliant, unnatural light, the fingers of his left hand seemed to clutch nervously at his clothing.

"Nothing ails me but happiness, mad, insane happiness," he answered, in a quick, uneven voice, utterly unlike his own *nonchalant*, graceful drawl. "Kiss me, mother mine. I feel as if I could embrace the whole world."

He caught her about the waist as he spoke, and pressed

her cool, wrinkled cheek against his own, which was burning like fire.

"You are ill, Philip," she said, earnestly. "Consuming with fever. Have you been to bed?"

"To bed!" he repeated, vaguely. "Why, no. It is only eleven o'clock."

"Eleven A. M., yes. But were you to bed last night?"

"I think not. I forget."

"Come, dear, lie down here and tell me what makes you happy," his mother said, looking at him uneasily. "Don't you know the doctor told you not to leave your room?"

"What dolts doctors are. If I had not gone out last night I should have missed the one chance of my life. Thank God I was not fool enough to listen to him."

"Come, dear, lie down and tell me."

"I couldn't lie down, but I will sit by you."

She sunk into a chair, almost overcome with nervous dread, and Philip placed himself beside her in a large easy-chair to which she motioned.

His head fell backward from momentary exhaustion, and a smile parted his quivering, crimson lips.

"Mine, mine!" he kept repeating, as though striving to convince himself of some fact.

"What is yours, dear?" asked his mother, anxiously, as she bent toward him and pressed his hand gently.

"Life, happiness, love," he answered, dreamily.

She looked at him in troubled silence for a moment, believing his words to be the very essence of delirium.

"You are ill, Philip," she said at last, tenderly. "Come with me to your room and go to bed, won't you?"

She spoke to him and smoothed his hand, as she had done when he was a little boy, and the remembrance came back to him now as he sat with closed eyes and allowed her to caress him.

"No, I am not ill," he answered, softly. "Only deliciously contented. Mother, can you remember so far back as when I was a little boy?"

"Yes, dear."

"Do you ever think of how we used to sit then, just as we are sitting now, with your hand caressing mine; and of how you used to try to instil into me principles of the strictest honor and rectitude?"

"Yes, my boy."

"And do you remember how you used to tell me that nearly all religion was comprised in that golden rule, which I learned in the infant class, 'Do unto others as you would that they should do unto you'?"

"Yes, dear."

"I used to understand it, but I don't any more. Is it not peculiar how our early teachings will suddenly leave us, and only our own desires will rise paramount to every idea of honor and truth that the world holds?"

"Philip, what are you talking about?"

"Nothing," he answered, with a short, peculiar laugh. "I am so outrageously, ridiculously happy that I honestly believe I have gone crazy. Don't worry your dear old head over it."

"I would not, if I understood you. Will you explain to me, Philip?"

"You will know soon enough."

"Philip," his mother asked, uneasily, "why do you not marry, and settle down? Winifred Delmer is such a dear girl."

He burst out laughing, as though she had made the funniest remark in the world.

"That is a most paradoxical remark. I am not ready to marry yet, mother mine, but I shall some day. What made you think of it just now?"

"Your mood; which I do not like."

"Not like it? You are heartless, cruel. Would you destroy my one chance for a life of bliss?"

He looked at her as a child might who had been denied a toy, and she patted his hand reassuringly.

"Phil," she said, tenderly, "if you do not lie down and take some rest, you will have no opportunity to enjoy this happiness of which you speak. You will be seriously ill."

"You think so?" he asked, concernedly. "Well, may I lie here? I could not be alone."

He arose from his chair and threw himself upon a couch. She poured into a glass some bromide, which she often took herself, and held it to his lips. He drank it, obediently, and as she turned away with a heavy sigh, a knock sounded upon the door.

"A lady to see you, madam," announced the servant.

"Her name?"

"She would give me none, but entreats you to see her, as it is important."

Reluctantly and with a backward glance at her son, she followed the servant from the room, ordering him to send for a physician at once.

Then she proceeded to the drawing-room where her guest awaited her.

As she entered, a lady, tall, slight, graceful, elegantly-clothed, stood before her, and throwing back her veil, revealed a face of perfect mold.

"Stella Northcote!" exclaimed Mrs. Pendennis, completely thrown from her usual reserved formality. Then remembering herself, she added more slowly, "You, Mrs. Brownell! I beg you will excuse my hasty greeting, attributing it to surprise. Will you not be seated?"

She held her guest's hand for one moment with nervous cordiality, then released it.

"I have come to see you this morning, Mrs. Pendennis"—and Stella's clear, sweet voice shook slightly—"upon a matter whose delicacy is so great that I hesitate to mention it, and yet I feel that you are the only person to whom I can apply in my great, overwhelming trouble."

Instantly Mrs. Pendennis' mind reverted to her son, and a violent shudder passed over her.

She tried to speak, but her lips were stiff and dry, and no sound issued from them.

Stella saw her emotion, and was encouraged by it.

"I have no mother to advise me," she continued, with a plaintive sorrow which touched her listener's heart, "and no one to whom I can apply for counsel and aid in this great crisis of my life, where honor and inclination are fighting a terrible battle for mastery. I served you once, and for that service I am paying with a life of misery, too deep for words. In exchange for that service I ask you to save me from dishonor, and your son from a crime."

"A crime!" gasped the aged woman, entwining her long, thin fingers together and making a vain endeavor to be calm. "What——" She paused, utterly unable to proceed.

"A crime, or worse—that is, worse to me who love him with my whole soul—death."

"My God!" panted his mother. "He has not been so rash, so foolish——"

"He has challenged my husband to a duel—my husband, whose equal in the use of firearms cannot be found in this country. Raoul will kill him, I tell you, and Philip throws himself in Raoul's way. I have pleaded, entreated, but it is of no avail. Last night at the theater—heavens! I cannot recount the scene without being consumed with shame—I promised to fly with him in order to save his life from being taken before my eyes. You must save your son from death—you must save me from disgrace."

"The police!" exclaimed the elder woman.

Stella silenced her with a gesture.

"Do you wish the affair published to the world?" she asked, hoarsely. "I have thought of all that. They would be put under bonds to keep the peace for a few months; but what, think you, would they care for that, even if it sacrificed both their fortunes? One of them will die, or all of us must be dishonored if a plan cannot be adopted. Can you suggest nothing?"

"Let me think—let me think!" cried Mrs. Pendennis, clasping her wrinkled hands across her brow. "Philip is ill, very ill."

"Not—not dangerous!" exclaimed Stella, putting out her hand, in a blind, entreating sort of way.

"No, I think not, I hope not."

"If the doctor would only keep him confined to his room until Raoul and I can get away it might do. It is the only way that I see."

"It would be a difficult thing to do. His brain seems to be on fire. You are going, then?"

"To save him if I can."

"And to save yourself?" put in the aged woman.

"Myself!" cried Stella, with feverish excitement. "What care I for myself! Do you think that life holds such allurement for me that I would take even one step in its direction for my own sake? Heaven! What is there before me but misery, and desolation, and death?"

She threw out her arms with a passionate gesture of

utter weariness that was painful from one of her youth and beauty.

"You love him so, then—my poor Philip?"

"He is the length and breadth of the universe to me; he is the soul of my soul; he is my God!"

She spoke now with an emotionless despair, which showed to her listener how utterly hopeless she was.

"Why did you marry Mr. Brownell?" whispered the elder woman, seeming to lack power to raise her voice.

"Why do you ask that? You! Bah! Do you not know that Philip would have followed me to the ends of the earth? There was but one way to fulfill my oath, and that was to place an impassable barrier between us. Now tell me how I am to prevent his beating his head against that barrier until life is extinct. As I love him, so he loves me. Tell me how I am to save him again."

The old woman arose slowly to her feet and stood tremblingly before her guest, her wrinkled face convulsed with agony.

"Why do you not curse me for my interference between you?" she said hoarsely. "Why do you not draw down the vengeance of God upon a lie so unholy as mine? Why do you not despise me and take from me the light of my old age, and make me suffer even as you have done?"

"What are you saying?" cried Stella in alarm.

"The truth at last," she answered brokenly. "I have——"

"Do not tell me!" exclaimed Stella, extending her hands as though to ward off a blow. "Do not make me feel that all my misery has been useless, that my great sacrifice was given in exchange for a lie! Do not render me more reckless than I am; I am afraid I should strangle you."

There was a light scarcely of reason in the purple, black eyes as they were raised to those of the woman before her, and then Stella staggered to her feet.

"Let me go! let me go!" she continued, groping her way to the door, as though stricken blind. "Save your son if you can. As for me, I am already a lost thing, without hope, so full of misery and the very essence of torture that every other feeling of heart or conscience is choked to death."

She drew her veil across her white, distorted face, and left the room and house without another word.

"And so God makes us suffer for a fault!"

The words were spoken with such quivering agony by the pallid, strained old lips that they were robbed of their commonplace sound, and went forth upon the air in a wail of scarcely comprehensible remorse.

As they died away, a burning hand, at odd variance with the ghastly face, seized her own, and turning, she saw her son beside her. His eyes were glittering with a peculiar light, his breathing was heavy and labored.

"If the truth is in you," he said, with a dead coldness which struck terror to her heart, "tell me the meaning of all this. How have you separated me from the woman I love?"

CHAPTER XXII.

STRICKEN with terror at his appearance, the wretched woman shrank back, gazing at him with glazed eyes and a still, white face, from which every emotion but fear seemed to have fled.

"Speak!" he said, through his set teeth, the word coming with something like a hiss.

"How do you know that I did so?" asked his mother, her words rendered almost inaudible by the chattering of her teeth.

"How do I know?" he repeated, tightening his grip upon her hand. "She told me once that it was not of her own desire that she forsook me. I heard her closing words as she left you, and I saw your manner when she had gone. She has deceived me again. She will not go with me. Is it not true?"

"She will not go!"

A change like the hue of death came over him. Ghastly before, there came over his face a green, moldy color which was frightful.

"And you, you, my mother, have caused all this. Is that true?"

He looked at her with those truth-compelling eyes, and slowly, almost without her knowledge, she dropped the single monosyllable:

"Yes!"

He did not throw her from him, he made no effort at violence, his fingers simply relaxed their hold, as the terrible look deepened upon his face, and she fell like a log at his side. His entire form seemed to become rigid and motionless, and he made no move to lift her to her feet.

"You, my mother!" he said, simply, seeming to see nothing as he gazed straight before him.

Then he burst into a horrible, discordant laugh and raised his arms with a gesture of pathetic unbelief.

"Trust!" he continued. "Who is worthy of trust and honor? Where are they to be found on earth or in heaven, when a man's own mother is his worst enemy?"

"Don't say that, Philip, my son, my darling," cried his mother, raising herself and creeping feebly, entreatingly to him. "Remember how I have loved you, and know that I did it for the best."

"The best! the best!" he repeated, contemptuously. "Was it best that you should kill in me every feeling of hope, of joy, and of life? You love me! A curse upon such love! Had you loved me, could you see me as I now am and not die with shame at the hideous part you have played?"

"She was not worthy of you," murmured the wretched woman, crouching close to him, but not daring to look again at that suffering face.

"Had she been the vilest thing on earth, my great love would have elevated and purified her, but she was pure, innocent. There is not a man on earth, not a station in life, which she would not have exalted. Oh, my love, my love, you were true, and yet I have lost you!"

He covered his face with his hands, and sunk into a chair, while dry, terrible, tearless sobs shook his entire frame.

"Philip," whispered his mother, kneeling by his side, and bowing her head upon his knees, "Philip, forgive me!"

"Tell me how you accomplished this thing first. What falsehood and deceit you used; you, whom I thought so gentle and so true."

There was a ring in his voice which she had never heard there before, and a wild, unreasoning hatred arose in her heart against the woman who caused it, forgetful that she had only herself to blame.

A resolve formed itself in her face, her eyes grew hard, her hand shook no longer, her lips became a thin straight line across her face.

"Listen to me then and judge," she said, steadily, rising with difficulty to her feet and taking a chair near him. "At least give me, your mother, the justice which you would render her. I heard how she had won your heart, how you were making yourself the talk of the town by dancing attendance upon her, in short what disgrace you were bringing upon yourself and your family by your attentions to one of her class.

"My heart was heavy and sore over it, for you were our pride, our joy, our only one, and I broached the subject to you but you repulsed me, and I saw that it was useless to plead with you. Like all young lovers, you were obstinate, contumacious, inflexible, blinded by your own violent passion, and I determined to see this divinity, to sound her character, and see in what way I could induce her to release my son from his bondage.

"I saw her. Upon my bended knees I prayed her to spare you, but she laughed in my face and threatened to take me by the shoulders and put me out. In all things she was the coarse, vulgar plebeian which I had expected to find, but I saw how it was possible for her wondrous beauty and her powers of dissimulation to have deceived you into believing her perfection.

"As she spoke, I saw her weak point, love of gold."

Philip started and a heavy shudder passed over him. She saw her advantage and pursued.

"I determined to attack her where she was weakest, and for that purpose I extolled the wealth of her present husband, pardonably, I think, increasing its vast extent. Though it told, I could plainly see that she was not as yet sufficiently impressed to give you up, since she admired you far more in her limited way, it amounting almost to an animal sort of love."

"You desecrate a holy sentiment! You—but go on!" he began, savagely, then interrupted himself.

"Holy! listen!"

The lines upon the old face hardened, an additional coldness crept into the unrelenting eyes.

"See if you think she deserves such a wealth of faith," she continued. "Seeing this, I told her that your father

stood upon the brink of ruin; that if it happened, you would be swept away with him; and that only your marriage with a woman of great fortune could save us."

"You told her that, that monstrous, unparalleled lie! cried Philip, starting from his seat, but sinking back again with a heavy groan.

"You forget yourself," said his mother coldly. "It was not so much a lie, as you with such delicious elegance term it, as you may suppose. To spare you pain we kept the truth from you. We suffered in silence rather than that you should know an hour's uneasiness. I have held my protecting arms over you and smiled, to shut out any terror I might have felt; I have—but bah! for this are we mothers. I have wandered. I may have exaggerated, as people even better than I claim to be have done under strong excitement, but I spoke no direct untruth; but it made its deep, its lasting impression."

She paused.

"Is that all? Were there no other words said? Why do you hesitate? Go on!"

He spoke with feverish excitement, with a tense earnestness which frightened her; but she had begun, and dared not draw back now.

She had not intended to tell a deliberate falsehood; but as she saw him still clinging to his idol, to the exclusion of every other thought, she set her teeth hard and defied the consequences.

"No, that is not all!" she exclaimed, with a boldness which surprised herself. "I offered her a large sum of money if she would accept the man she married, and release you from your slavery."

"And she—what did she do? Speak quickly!"

There was a faint suspicion of triumphant laughter in the wrinkled face as she saw the effect of her words, but it was destined to be short-lived, if she could only have looked a little into the future and have seen it.

"What do all such creatures do under such circumstances?" she asked scornfully. "She took my money, and gave me back my son."

"She—did—that?" he gasped, his face rigid and drawn, his voice hoarse and strident.

"I thought it might surprise you," she answered calmly.

"Don't deceive me in this," he cried, passionately, "for I will never forgive you—never! Swear that you have spoken the truth."

He had again seized her hand, and was holding her so that her eyes were upon a level with his own. He looked at her searchingly, distrustfully, and anger gave her voice to reply.

"Since your mother's word is not enough," she said, haughtily, "I will swear."

He released her suddenly again, and strode rapidly and agitatedly up and down the room.

"She sold herself to you for money, did she?" he exclaimed, vehemently, at last, stopping before her. "Well, now she shall sell herself to me for a greater price. I have been fortunate in Wall Street of late, and I have a fortune which can cover his by many thousands."

"Philip, you would not——" began his mother, in consternation.

"I will have her, even if it costs my soul!"

"But think of her unworthiness. Have you no pride?"

"Pah! none! The day she forsook me I lost all pride, all self-esteem, all desire, save the one absorbing resolve to have her, or kill the man who has taken her from me, and by Heaven I will succeed."

"My God! Have you no thought of your family?"

"What regard had my family for me? Don't talk that kind of sickly sentimentality to me. I tell you it is all dead but this one morbid desire, which shall be gratified, or either he or I shall die."

"Philip, you are killing me!" cried his mother, raising her hands supplicatingly.

"No. You have shown me the way, and I thank you. I shall cover her with gold—bright, beautiful gold—which she loves better than she does me, and I will say, 'Come to love, to happiness, and me.'"

He seized his hat from the table where it lay and started from the room.

"You shall not go!" exclaimed Mrs. Pendennis, rising and stretching her arms across the door to bar his exit.

Lightly, as if she had been a feather, he caught her in his left arm and removed her from his way.

"Wish me joy, mother," he cried, with delirious glee, as he rushed from the house. "I am going to my love,"

CHAPTER XXIII.

"SHE is playing me false! I feel it and know it. When I am away from her, I can see the defects in her acting. I can feel every thin spot in her armor. I can hear every deceitful tone of her voice. But when I am with her she throws a glamour over my eyes, and I am only what she would have me. I love even while I hate her, and if I find her in her deception I will kill her; kill her, by the eternal heavens, as well as him!"

Raoul Brownell brought his fist down upon a magnificent inlaid table with such force as to cause the entire room to shake. His voice was hoarse and strident, and his eyes held an ugly light which bespoke mischief.

"I will find out if she has lied to me," he continued. "I don't understand this sudden desire for Europe, a proposition which she spurned a few weeks ago, but I will know before I start. That little serpent, Navie, is the only one who can help me. As things are, she would refuse to speak, and defy me, but if she were only Earlscourt's wife, I would have all power over her. The little fool worships him, and he has become bewitched by her colorless face. By threatening her she would obey me, and Stella trusts her. Is she fool enough to believe that I take so much pains to persuade her disinterestedly? Bah! Does she take me for such a fool? I must see Earlscourt and hasten that marriage. I wonder if she knows if Pendennis was in Stella's room? God! It makes a madman of me when I think that I, Raoul Brownell, may be so deceived."

There was no misery in his tone save wounded self-love.

He loved Stella with all the passionate strength of a brute nature. There was no ideality, no poetry, no romance, such as a nature like hers craved and demanded. He loved the body, but had no sympathy with the soul. He could not have understood the high moral tone of her nature which struggled against impudence and strove to maintain his honor in face of a deathless love.

He crossed the room and surveyed himself in a cheval-glass; then, seeming to be thoroughly satisfied with the reflection which greeted him, he turned and left the room.

He entered his wife's boudoir, but it was empty, and he looked about, surprised that the beauties there should seem so lusterless, lacking only her presence.

Then he turned from it and went down to the library. There he found only Navie, curled up like a kitten in the big hollow of a great easy-chair.

He smiled down upon her, and stroked her cheek gently with the palm of his hand as he stood over her for a single instant, then he threw himself lazily upon a couch opposite her, and stretched out his long, graceful limbs with easy indolence.

"What a listless sort of morning it is," he said, half concealing a forced yawn.

"I don't know," answered Navie, her long lashes shading her dark eyes, though she could see him perfectly. "The air struck me as being particularly invigorating."

"You certainly look anything but animated," he responded, with a laugh. "Why are you not out for a drive?"

"I did not care to drive to-day," returned Navie, watching him closely through her half-closed eyes.

"Expecting Earlscourt, eh?"

"Not particularly," answered Navie, with a vivid blush.

"And so you allowed poor Stella to drive alone?"

The tone was so careless as to deceive Navie.

"She did not drive," she said slowly.

"No? Where did she go?"

There was a smoldering look in the gray eyes which frightened her.

"To the park, probably. I did not notice in which direction she went," answered Navie.

"Lie number one, to be jotted down against you, young woman," said Brownell mentally; but aloud he murmured carelessly, "See how little I know of my wife's disposition. Now, I thought she detested walking, and did not know she ever did it."

"She does not often, but she is not well."

"No, poor child. Pendennis upset her when he so impudently forced himself into her presence at the theater last night."

Navie started perceptibly, a fact which did not escape Brownell's notice.

"He visited her, then?" she asked nervously, utterly ignorant of what she ought to say.

"What frauds you women are! As if you were not with her and did not know all about her!" answered Brownell playfully.

Navie forced a mirthless laugh, but did not speak.

"Were you not with her?" persisted Brownell.

"Ye—es," she answered, hesitatingly.

"Number two!" he ejaculated, mentally. "Why should I hope for the truth from a woman whose whole life is a lie. Her marriage is the only thing which can accomplish it. But Pendennis was there! Once Earlscourt's wife, let her dare refuse to answer me or deceive me. Come now," he continued aloud, "what were he and Stella talking of?"

"Did not she tell you?" asked poor Navie, tremulously.

"Yes, she told me, but I am anxious to know if she told the truth."

All the carelessness had died from his voice, and only the cold, strained tones were heard.

"You should be ashamed of your want of confidence," said Navie, more boldly.

"Answer me!"

"I will not!"

"Will not?"

"Will not!" she repeated, firmly. "I am tired of being your spy, and will no longer submit to it. Your wife is a good and true woman who would scorn so contemptible an action as you engage in. Once for all, I will have nothing further to do with it."

A peculiarly rigid look had settled about Brownell's mouth, but he forced himself to smile serenely as he answered lightly, but with a slight sneer:

"I congratulate you upon your fidelity. It is a rare trait among women, but one to be all the more admired. Earlscourt is a fortunate man."

Navie crimsoned, as she always did when he spoke of her lover.

"I have wanted to speak to you for some time upon that subject, Mr. Brownell. I mean about Mr. Earlscourt," said Navie, with nervous hesitation. "He is

very anxious that our—our marriage should take place soon. What do you think of it?"

"Think? That it is the wisest and best thing to do," he answered, warmly,

"Then, do you not think I ought to tell him?"

"Nonsense! why should you?"

"My mother is dead," continued Navie, almost pleadingly, "and there is no one who knows or would be likely to betray me unless—unless——"

"Unless I did?"

"Ye—es."

"You are hardly complimentary."

"I know; but you will forgive me when you remember my position, and think how even trifles terrify me."

"People have always considered me a gentleman. I hope the term has not been misapplied."

"You are right, and I am ungrateful. I hope you will pardon me for what was hardly a doubt, but rather a suggestion of one. If he should find out afterward I would kill myself. I could never bear the shame."

A grim smile passed over Brownell's face, but failed to impress Navie, who was looking at him with eyes which saw nothing.

"You grow morbid, morose and splenetic. Why not 'let the dead past bury its dead?'" he said, gently.

"Because I cannot!" she answered, springing from her chair and walking restlessly up and down the room. "Because the ghosts of my past errors will rise up before me to curse me. Because I am the living, breathing semblance of a hideous lie."

"If you were the only 'hideous lie' in the world, I might excuse you for becoming dramatic over it," returned Brownell, stifling a yawn. "But there is scarcely a life which has not its skeleton, and those beautiful, brilliant, seemingly transparent creatures are the deepest after all."

"Mr. Earlscourt!"

The door was thrown open and Earlscourt walked in, as the servant announced him.

"I hope you will pardon me for instructing your servant to show me here, Brownell, but I understood him to say Miss Arnold was alone," said Earlscourt, apologetically.

"It is not our custom to receive our guests in this room, but so privileged a person as yourself is welcome everywhere," answered Brownell, courteously, and shaking hands warmly.

"Thank you! You are well, Navie?"

As he turned to her, a warm, eager light came into the fine eyes which completely transformed his always handsome face.

Beneath it Navie's somewhat cold nature seemed to grow fervid and impassioned. A flush crept into her pale cheeks, a glad, ardent look burned in her lustrous eyes, and her whole being seemed to thrill and tremble as she yielded her soul to the sweet influence of his own.

"I am well," she answered simply.

"Where is Stel?" asked Earlscourt. "I particularly want to see her to-day."

"That is unfortunate, since she is out. Has she told you that we leave for England early next week?"

"No. Is it true, then?"

"Yes, I think so. I came in here this morning to ask Miss Arnold if she will accompany us, but had neglected to do so until now. You will go, Navie?"

He knew she would not, neither did he intend that she should, but he had his own point to gain in asking her.

Earlscourt regarded her with something like pleading in his eyes. Even a faint contemplation of a separation showed him how unutterably dear she had become.

"You are very kind, more than generous," faltered Navie, "but I—I think I will not go."

The relief upon Earlscourt's face was so great as to be almost amusing.

"But I don't know about leaving you," said Brownell designingly. "Earlscourt has confided you to my wife, and I cannot allow her to neglect the charge."

"But suppose I take her myself again—that is, if she is willing to come to me. In this emergency, why could we not be married to-morrow as well as a month later, Navie?" asked Earlscourt.

"A capital arrangement," cut in Brownell. "I wonder that it did not occur to me before."

"But——" commenced Navie.

"No buts about it," interrupted Brownell with anima-

tion. "Don't let her dampen your enthusiasm, Earlscourt. Women think we would not appreciate their consent if it were too easily obtained. She'll come around all right, and Stel will be delighted. I am as pleased over a prospective wedding as if I were a woman myself. I shall go out to see if I can find Stel, and get everything in order, and leave you to subjugate the obstinate party."

CHAPTER XXIV.

It was all over.

Navie Arnold had become Mrs. Edwin Earlscourt, the *recherche* wedding breakfast had been partaken of, and the guests were standing about in little knots discussing it all preparatory to taking their departure.

"Such a charming wedding!" said Miss Reeves gushingly; "and what a surprise! Really, Mrs. Brownell, you deserve the palm for enchanting little affairs of this kind!"

"Why, I never engaged in one before in my life," answered Stella, "except my own."

"I know," simpered Miss Reeves. "But all your entertainments are such loves."

"You are kind," said Stella coldly.

There was something about this beautiful wedding which had jarred upon her nerves, and she felt somehow as if it should be spoken of in accents hushed and awed.

"What an exquisite bride Miss Arnold made, but there was an expression about her face as she stood before the clergyman which I could not understand," said Miss Fern, a few moments later, to Stella. "There was a look of disquietude, I might almost say startled alarm, about her which quite puzzled me. Once one might have fancied she saw an apparition. She turned so ghastly, her eyes seemed to burn, her skin became moldy, and she looked as though she would shrivel up and dry before one's eyes. Your husband noticed it, for he coughed aloud. She started and glanced in his direction. He smiled at her and shook his head, and it seemed to reassure her, though the smile she gave him in return was more mournful than tears."

Stella laughed lightly.

"What an imagination you have, Addie," she said half contemptuously. "You have played emotional parts for so long that you are thoroughly imbued with sensational romance. Why do you not write a novel?"

"Say what you like, it is true," persisted Miss Fern.

"Nonsense! I never saw people more thoroughly in love in my life than Ted and Navie. They will be happy, never fear."

"Do you believe that they are always happiest who love most?" asked Miss Fern. "It seems to me that an infatuated husband would become rather a bore in time."

"Not if the infatuation is mutual," answered Stella, earnestly. "God help the woman who is a party to a loveless marriage, say I."

"Hear! hear!" exclaimed Jack Fosburg, one of Stella's friends, as he approached and overheard her closing words. "The divine Stella has become a stump orator, and prates of love."

"Don't mix your terms so, Jack," said Stella, with mock severity. "Orators never prate."

"It's all the same," continued Jack, undaunted. "I dare say they do, only they have a reputation, and people can't deprecate them. What a happy man Brownell ought to be."

"And how do you know that he is not?"

"Why, I saw him looking as sour as stale beer a moment ago, and an occasion like this should so remind him of his own happiness that he has only room for hilarity."

"What was the matter?"

"Oh, I don't know. Come to think, I don't wonder though, for, after all, it might have made him particularly jolly. Somebody was telling him something about an old flame of yours, that we all thought was to be the happy possessor some time—Phil Pendennis."

"What about him?"

The voice which spoke was utterly unlike Stella's. It was cold, and dull, and metallic, but when Jack Fosburg looked at her, she was smiling in her old saucy way, as if the world contained nothing but light, and happiness, and love.

"Why, let me see," said Fosburg, believing he had

been mistaken. "He's off his head, or some such matter. Went out of his mother's house in a terrible state, charged down the street with his hat in his hand, gesticulating violently and talking about money and women, and then, all at once, he tumbled over all in a heap, and had to be carried home in an ambulance; now he's raving in delirium and has to be watched by two or three men. There! you have it all, and I'm out of breath."

He stopped in his harangue, and looked at Stella. The smile had not faded from her face, but seemed to have been frozen there. Her lips were rigid, her eyes set, her complexion loamy.

He saw and—understood.

With that kindness of heart for which actors are noted, he placed himself in front of her, so that he screened her from the other guests.

She noticed the act, and it recalled her to herself more than any words could have done.

"Thank you," she murmured, simply. "He was an —old—friend, and I am sorry—very sorry for him."

"Do you think it necessary to explain to me?" he asked, earnestly, all the lightness gone from his tone. "I was a brute to speak as I did, but I did not know."

"Not know what?" asked Stella, throwing back her head with a regal gesture which he remembered meant war. "That Mr. Pendennis was a friend whom I liked in the old days?"

"Yes—anything," answered Fosburg, vaguely, admiring her desire to cover her weakness.

"Where are Navie and Ted, Jack?" she asked, with all her old vivacity.

"Lord knows! Escaped somewhere to bill and coo awhile, I guess. 'Oos ducky is oo?' etc. You know the old chestnuts."

"Let us see if we can find them."

He offered his arm obediently, and they left the room together.

In the hall Stella excused herself and went upon her search alone.

In a small, exquisite morning-room at the end of the hall Earlscourt had found a moment alone with his wife.

She was radiantly beautiful in her shimmering satin robe, for Stella would hear of nothing less than white

with orange blossoms. Her arms were bare, her neck uncovered, her dress of finest fabric covered with costly lace, and over all her lovely face gleamed like a star.

She raised her beautiful, bare arms and placed them about her husband's neck, who stood before her flushed, eager, and handsome.

"Oh, Ted, how happy I am!" she murmured below her breath, as if to give it expression would be to provide her happiness wings. "Almost wickedly happy."

"And yet I almost fancied that I saw a shade of regret upon your face," he answered, as he bent to kiss the sweet, tremulous lips.

"If there at all," she exclaimed brokenly, "it was brought by a knowledge of my unworthiness."

"Never say that again," commanded Earlscourt tenderly. "No matter what your surroundings may have been, you must remember that uncleanliness cannot mar the value of a diamond. It is only where the jewel itself is defaced, when it is full of imperfections and flaws, that it is worthless."

"You have not yet discovered mine."

"Nor ever shall. I ask no blessings sent from heaven. I have them all, possessing you."

Navie shuddered in his arms.

"Do not say so. It sounds like sacrilege, and is one of God's most punishable offenses. Oh, Ted, should anything occur to cause you to withdraw your love from me, I should die."

He laughed lightly, overlooking the dark shadow which hung about her, but whose presence she could feel.

"You talk foolishly, my darling, but I will not chide, for it shows me the extent of your love. Do not fear. My heart is an unruly member, over which I have no control. You have full possession, and I no choice. Whether I would will it so or not, you are my idol, my one love, my own, my wife."

He pressed her to his heart and kissed her passionately.

"But if I had been false, Ted, away back in my life——"

"Why, then, I'd tear the heart from my breast which held so despicable a love."

She buried her face in his bosom, to hide the blanched terror of it, and still he smiled.

"What nonsense you can talk, sweetheart," he continued tenderly. "I shall begin to believe soon that I have married a veritable child."

The door opened to admit Stella.

"Here you are at last," she cried nervously. "I have looked for you everywhere."

"What is the matter?" asked Navie anxiously, noticing the pallor of the usually beautifully tinted face.

"Nothing!" she answered; "or, rather, everything, which amounts to much the same. Ted, Philip Pendennis is seriously ill, and I must hear the truth of his condition. I have no one to trust but you. Will you find out for me, old friend?"

There was a world of grief and suppressed emotion in her voice, which went straight to the hearts of her listeners.

"Of course I will," returned Earlscourt, heartily, "but I think you excite yourself unnecessarily, dear."

"No; it is true, and I am the cause of it. Oh, Ted, if he dies, I—I——"

The sweet voice trembled and broke, while the purple eyes gazed at them dry and tearless.

"He will not die," said Earlscourt, reassuringly. "There! Calm yourself, dear. You are giving way without cause."

She shivered as if with cold.

"No, I do not. I have suffered so much that my very heart seems numb and paralyzed, and yet I have power to suffer still."

"Do not speak so," exclaimed Earlscourt, gently taking her hand. "It will all come right by and by."

Prophetic? Yes. But if he could only have known the means.

"Let us return to the drawing-room," he continued, "and do not become downcast until you receive my report."

"You will tell me the truth? You will conceal nothing?" she asked, eagerly.

"On my honor!" he answered, as he led them back to their guests.

CHAPTER XXV.

As the last guest departed with a smiling *au revoir* from Stella, a liveried messenger arrived with a note for her.

One of her own servants brought it and placed it in her hand.

Before she broke the seal she recognized the heraldic emblems upon the envelope and nerved herself to hear something, she knew not what.

"DEAR MRS. BROWNELL,"—she read—"Doubtless you have already heard of my son's serious illness, for bad news is falcon-winged, and I am cast down with nervous dread and apprehension. His visit to you at the theater, and your promise to fly with him, seem to prey upon his diseased, delirious mind, and his physicians tell me that their only hope of saving his life lies in you. We are compelled to keep him under constant espionage and restrain him forcibly, while his calls for you are piteous. He has not slept a single moment, and the strongest sedatives have no effect. I am almost crazed with grief and fear.

"Will you come to my boy? I never counsel deception between a husband and wife, but this is a matter of serious moment, an affair of life and death. Your love, even though a crime, can save him. Have you the courage to restore to me his precious life and leave him again? Can you add this sacrifice to the one you have made and are making, for his sake? Can you save his life from consuming fever by an act of pardonable duplicity, even as you have saved it from your husband at the cost of your life's happiness? If so, I beseech you, come! CORDELIA PENDENNIS."

Stella crushed the note in her hand and started to her feet, her face blanched with terror.

"He will die!" she whispered, her mind in a chaotic state, "and I will be to blame. Oh, my love, my love!"

She rushed headlong up the stairs, and almost tumbled into her husband's arms.

"Hello! Whither away, fair maid?" he exclaimed, facetiously.

"'I am going a milking, sir, she said,'" she answered, forcing herself to speak in his own vein, though her lips were drawn and strained in her agony.

"Why, Stella," he cried, noticing the effort she made to appear merry, "you are awfully pale. Are you ill?"

"The wedding has upset me a trifle. I am going to my room to rest until six," she returned, uneasily.

"That is right. You need it. I will give orders that you are not to be disturbed. By the way: who was your note from? I noticed Thompson had one."

She looked at him for a moment, but his countenance was perfectly serene and undisturbed.

"The redoubtable Madame O'Connell has summoned me to appear before her tribunal. In short, I am to have a dress fitted."

She spoke gayly, and flitted by him down the long hall to her own room.

Once there, the smile which she had impelled to serve her, forsook her white lips, and with fingers which shook so that they were almost useless, she removed her own dress and replaced it with one of rich, dark material. Then putting on her cloak and hat, she drew a thick, dark veil across her face and, locking her door, slipped noiselessly from the house.

She walked swiftly in the direction of the Pendennis mansion, and, having rang for admission, was shown into the presence of Mrs. Pendennis.

"How is he?" she asked, forgetting greetings in her nervous dread of hearing the worst.

"No better," answered his mother, tremulously, shading her face with her hand, as all her treachery to this loving, generous woman returned to her. "Will you go to him at once?"

Without speaking, Stella motioned to her to lead the way, and followed to the room where the sick man lay.

Two physicians were there, one on either side of the bed, each endeavoring by persuasion, and some force, to keep their patient in bed and from injuring himself, and at the foot of the bed stood a professional nurse.

He was clutching nervously at the covers of the bed, and raving out as they prevented him from rising.

"I tell you, you shall not detain me. She is waiting;

don't you hear? Oh, Stella, darling! I am coming. Wait, dear, wait!"

He made another ineffectual attempt to spring from the bed, just as the door opened to admit his mother and Stella.

"At last!" exclaimed one of the doctors, in relieved accents. "Come at once, Mrs. Brownell, and see how superior you are to science."

She had already crossed the floor, and fallen upon her knees at his side, oblivious of all save the change in the appearance of the man she loved.

"Philip," she whispered, soothingly, laying her cool, soft hand upon his burning face, "I have come to you, dear. Do you know me—Stella?"

Calmly he lay back upon his pillow and smiled with the placid sweetness of a little child.

"Yes, I know you," he answered, softly. "You are the one star over the donjon tower, and you shine alone for me. Is it not true?"

"Yes, for you alone, dear," she murmured, gently, while tears choked her voice.

And the others retired to an adjoining room and, leaving the door ajar, left them alone.

"You will be quiet now and try to sleep, will you not?" she continued, when she could control her voice.

"No," he answered, gently shaking his head, while the same tranquil smile remained upon his flushed face. "I should be afraid I would dream you were here, and should know no peace for fear I should awake. Having you will do more than rest. You are reason, and loneliness is delirium. "My brain says, 'You rave,' and my heart pleads against it, and the victory belongs to my heart, for I am weak."

"And therefore need sleep," interrupted Stella. "You must live, Philip."

"Live?" he repeated, dwelling happily upon the word, while he pressed her pink palm to his cheek. "Yes, I live now when you are here. I think, if my soul stood seeking admission at the gate of heaven, and I should turn one moment to cast a pitying glance at those in hades, if I saw you there I would forsake eternal paradise to be clasped one moment in your arms, even then to separate forever. From star to star, from sea to sea,

from heaven to hades, you are my endless, limitless, infinite eternity."

He spoke with a passionate earnestness, with a loving lingering upon each word, which gave them almost an unholy sound.

And she—was silent. Silent from very excess of emotion, and almost ceased to breathe as, with bowed head and downcast eyes, she listened to the full, rich, tremulous tones of his voice, as he told her of that love which *could not die!*

For some moments he lay, silently caressing the little hand, which still rested on his burning cheek; and when he spoke, there was a plaintive sound about his voice which suggested the heavier tones of an Æolian harp, when the wind which plays upon it bears tears in its bosom.

"I believe, had I been cold, dead, and dumb to all the world contained, and you, entering, had found me thus, that one tiny, fluttering kiss from your dear lips upon my eyelids would have caused them to open for one look at your perfect face, my spirit would have returned from its exile in eternal space, and life, glad, joyous, happy, would have rushed in headlong, eager haste through my veins again. I believe, if I were dead and away up there in the blue vault of the mystic heaven, and you should long to see my face once more, I should find a means to gather every star of night within my hands, and, holding them on high, direct your sight to me, until your gaze, led by their light, fell full upon me.

"The salty seeds of your dear tears upon my grave would cause flowers to spring, to show that even in death my love could not forget. I believed my faith in your truth, your love, to be so nobly placed, that I would have as soon expected to see the moon false to the light it has always shown, and fall like a dead thing to this world of ours, as you unworthy my worship; and yet, oh, Stella, worse than Esau, that the Bible tells us of, you sold not only your birthright, but both our hearts, both our lives, both our souls, for paltry gold, and *my mother* was the purchaser! And still, still I love you, with a deathless and immortal love. I cannot strangle it, it will not burn out, it will not even *starve*. Denied a kiss, a word, even a careless

glance, it would yet live upon the air you breathe. Oh, Stella, why—why were you false to me?"

The voice died away in a wail, which touched her very soul.

She had raised her head, and was looking at him with strained earnestness.

"Who—who told you that I—*sold* our love, Philip?"

The words were scarcely spoken, they came more as the faint, whispering sound that comes to us when an echo dies away.

"My mother!"

No need for him further to explain; she saw all, knew all by that divine intuition which governs a woman's life, and she bowed her head and accepted the additional weight laid upon her yoke with only a faint beating of her heart against the fate which bound her.

"Stella, you told me once that you would go away with me, but you made that promise to—well, you know why. Forget that. Forget all doubt, all fear, all the past, and think of our future, dear. Will you condemn yourself and me to further misery, or will you come with me, dear, for better or for worse? Decide now, and, whatever it may be, by it will I abide."

She arose and stood before him in all her glorious, perfect beauty.

For one moment there seemed to be a struggle between conflicting elements in her nature, but when she spoke, her voice was firm and unshaken.

"The past is irrevocable, the future is God's, the present is ours. In that brief season which belongs to me, I promise that I will go 'whither thou goest,' and it lies with God and in His future, to allow me to keep or break my design. I shall fight no more against my heart, I wage no more war with my soul's fond love, I render the sacrifice of a life of no account, I blight your future and blast your honor. I am accursed and yet—I go!"

And from her soul she meant it.

He raised his one useful arm and she, placing herself within the circle of its embrace, was drawn to his bosom and held there.

He kissed her once lightly upon the lips, with no fire of irreverent love; she lay peacefully upon his bosom, and

when the silver-tongued clock chimed the hour, she raised her head and he—slept.

She gently disengaged herself from his arm, and crossing the room on tiptoe, motioned to the others to enter. Noiselessly they obeyed her silent command, and one of the physicians, with scarcely perceptible touch, felt the fluttering pulse.

"There is undoubtedly improvement," he said, softly, to his associate. "The danger is already passed."

Stella breathed a light, hysterical sigh, which was almost a sob, and taking one of his cards, she penciled across its face:

"Philip, I will return."

"Give it to him when he awakes," she whispered, and passing from the chamber left him there, asleep.

Blindly, but with a certain guilty gladness, she made her way down-stairs and out into the waning sunlight, and there, awaiting her coming, close by the gate, his presence unconcealed, she found—her husband!

CHAPTER XXVI.

As Stella raised her eyes and saw who stood before her her heart almost ceased its palpitations, and she clutched at the railing of the fence for support.

With indifferent grace Brownell raised his hat and calmly offered her his arm.

"Tired?" he asked carelessly. "You should not venture upon such long walks when you are fatigued. Luckily the carriage is at the corner. Will you drive home?"

She looked at him, not understanding his mood, but his face was perfectly composed and unmoved.

"Thanks!" she answered, as she declined by a gesture his proffered arm.

She followed him to the carriage, and he assisted her to enter, then tucked the robes around her with quiet affection.

"Home!" he said to the coachman, and they were rapidly driven there.

He commented upon the weather with greatest placidity, spoke about one of the horses being a trifle lame, and

even told her a funny anecdote one of the wedding-guests had told him.

Arrived at home, he assisted her from the carriage, and followed her to her own boudoir.

He dismissed her maid, and waited until she had removed her hat and wraps, then all the carelessness disappeared from his manner, and he stood before her like an avenging Nemesis.

"Perhaps now," he said, in a hard, cold voice, "you will be kind enough to explain to me how you happened to be in that house when you represented yourself to me as desiring a rest for your evening's work."

She hesitated a moment, then answered in a low, sweet voice which resembled the tender notes of a bird:

"Mrs. Pendennis sent for me, and I answered her call."

"I was not aware that you were acquainted."

"We have known each other for months."

"Why did she wish to see you?"

"The—the reason she wished should remain a secret, Raoul. You trust me, do you not?"

"Answer this much: Did you see her son?"

She remained silent for some minutes.

To tell a lie hurt her, and she despised it; but the truth—there was no limit to the harm it might do.

Then she summoned courage and answered, one word:

"No!"

"How do you explain this letter?"

He held the fatal missive before her eyes and spoke in a triumphant, cruel voice, which was almost worse than a blow.

For a single moment the letter and the contents of the room seemed to swim before her eyes; she opened her lips, and a voiceless groan seemed to come from her very heart, her lips stiffened, and it was with the greatest effort that she spoke.

"I have no explanation to offer," she said hoarsely.

"Then you confess that when you said you did not see Philip Pendennis you—lied?" he asked brutally.

"I confess it."

The words were scarcely articulated; they seemed to slip through the dry, parched lips without any volition of her own. Her eyes were wide open, looking at him with

a fixed stare which burned into his very soul, and yet she saw nothing.

Dazed at first by her audacity in confessing the hideous truth, he glared at her in stupid amazement; then, with a horrible, smothered imprecation, he leaped toward her, with only the feelings of the savage beast in his mind and heart, his hand raised, ready to strike, his eyes glowing with imbruted ferocity.

But she raised her hand, and, by a gesture, stopped him.

"Don't do that!" she said, in a scorched, emotionless voice. "You degrade yourself, and I—am not worth it."

She sunk in a little heap into a chair, and looked at him with eyes from which every particle of expression had fled.

"Tell me one thing, and as there is truth in you, speak the truth," he exclaimed. "Do you love that man?"

She did not even lower her head, she did not seek to conceal anything, but the glory of divinity seemed to rest upon her lovely face, and, with its aureola-crowned head, resembled some perfect mediæval saint.

"I will not attempt to deceive you again, Raoul," she answered monotonously, though her face was irradiated with its almost sacred expression. "I do love him. I have tried with all my soul to conquer it, but it was stronger than I and overwhelmed me. I tried to let it burn itself out, but the fire was unquenchable, and burned on with even stronger, irrepressible fury. I tried to strangle it, but the red marks of my tightly-gripped fingers only made new circles of unending, guilty, blissful torture for me; and if I thought it dead, it arose in the night and stood by my bedside, shouting aloud in its mirth at my mistake, and in a quivering, eager voice, exclaiming, 'Seek not to destroy me, for I am immortal!' There is no death for love, Raoul! I have wronged you! If I could only have foreseen it all! I would give all the rest of my wretched life if I could only roll back the universe for a few short months. Raoul, you have been good and generous to me, and you say—you love me! I will go away from you—you shall never see my hateful, deceptive face again, if you will only tell me that you forgive me."

She had arisen from her crouching attitude in the

chair, and now stood before him, her face convulsed with torture, her arms extended imploringly.

He threw her hands aside with fiendish harshness, and seized her roughly by the shoulder.

"Never!" he hissed through his set teeth, his breath coming almost with a sound. "I would kill you were it not that I see a way to make you suffer more. I have believed this all along. I knew he was in your dressing-room at the theater. You have lied to me, tricked me, but I know at last, and he dies. There is no hope for him. It may be a consolation to you in the future to know that you caused his death."

She saw the weight of his words. It was what she had feared would occur; but she knew that it was worse than useless to attempt to deceive him after his perusal of that letter, and that she must trust to her own ingenuity alone to prevent it.

Her face became positively death-like.

"You will not do that," she whispered. "You will not make yourself a murderer because of me."

He laughed grimly.

"It is not my becoming a murderer for which you care," he cried.

"But you must think of yourself, Raoul."

"I do," he answered, with savage sternness, "and only of myself. There is only one feeling upon this earth which is stronger than love, and that is hate combined with thirst for revenge. Until I can bring to you a sample of his life's blood, my vengeance will be incomplete. Then will your torture begin. I will not kill you. I have a better plan for vindicating my wrongs, compared with which death would be a pleasant release. But first he dies."

To Stella that sentence comprised all the suffering which the world held, and she would have dropped from heaven into the depths of hades, and have considered it a sweet privelege, to have prevented it.

With a cry which issued from the depths of her heart she fell upon her knees before him and raised her hands in supplication.

"You must not," she gasped, wildly. "Oh, Raoul, have you no pity, no mercy? He has committed no sin.

The fault is mine, all mine. Kill me and let him live. On my knees I beseech you, have mercy! have mercy!"

With his foot he spurned her and she fell upon her face.

"Have you sunk so low as that?" he asked, scornfully. "Have you no greater sense of shame than to plead with your husband for your lover's life?"

"My love, but not my lover," she corrected, sorrowfully. "Absolve me from that, Raoul, from the sin of living under your roof while I brought dishonor upon your name. Oh, Raoul, I am so unutterably miserable, so divided between love and duty. Have pity upon me, and help me, oh, my husband, help me to do right."

Only a little compassion; only a little sympathy; only a little uplifting of the drooping spirit and—the drama off the stage would have ended without the sacrifice of a life, the curtain would have rung down upon a woman repentant of a guilty design and saved through the medium of love.

But he knew nothing of the spirit of immolation; he knew nothing of propitiation, he only thought of his own selfish desires, which could not be gratified, and he cared nothing for the saving of her soul or for its eternal condemnation. His highest thought was bodily possession and he put her from him with an odious oath.

"Pity!" he repeated, contemptuously. "Have you had pity on me? What am I? A dupe, a gull, a deceived husband!"

"No; by, Heaven you wrong me!" exclaimed Stella, leaping to her feet as the last words fell from his lips. "I swear it! I may have wronged you in thought, but not in deed."

"Perhaps, but I merely anticipated the act," he replied, coldly. "My assertion may be premature—certainly it would not have been false had I given you more time. Were you a thousand times more guilty, I could not despise you more."

"You will not forgive me, Raoul?" she asked, with tenderest entreaty.

"Never!" he answered, firmly. "I have already forgotten that I ever loved you. Because you are my wife, the man dies who possesses your heart. You have changed me from a tender, loving husband to a fiend."

"Only say you forgive me, Raoul," she pleaded, piteously. "I will go away. You shall never see me again, and you will be happy."

"You will do nothing of the kind," he returned, in a cruel, sneering voice. "You would follow in the footsteps of the other members of your profession, who consider a divorce as only a matter of every-day occurrence. I will not have my name dragged through the mire. Having married one of your kind was bad enough."

With a haughty gesture of majestic pride, Stella threw back her head and looked him in the eye.

"I beg that you will leave my profession out of the question," she said, slowly. "We belong to the public, consequently our poor little private misery is theirs, while the wonderful society, of which you are a most worthy scion, keeps their griefs and disgraces from the papers, simply by the amount of ducats they are forced to put out. I am tired of it all. Had you shown me any sympathy, any pity, had you shown any desire to save me, I would have regarded you almost as a god; but you have shown me only that contemptible, mean-spirited principle which I have always known you possessed. Perhaps you are right, and every other man would have acted in the same way. Perhaps I deserve the names you have called me, the insults you have not hesitated to shower upon me. If you can afford to defy the criminal court, I can defy the divorce court. I am done. My struggle is ended."

"Listen to me!" cried Brownell, seizing her by the arm and speaking in a voice husky with anger. "Any move which you may make means *instant* death to him. Do you understand me? Even if I do the work of an assassin, I shall not wait. Remember that his life for the immediate present is in your hands. Now go, and may the curse of Heaven go with you!"

He threw her from him so violently that she went reeling and staggering across the room, and he, not waiting to know in what way he had injured her, left the room with a frightful oath, and slammed the door behind him.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"GOOD-MORNING, Mrs. Earlscourt!"

The name was pronounced with just the faintest *soupcon* of a sneer as Brownell entered one of the charming little morning-rooms, the day following his recorded interview with Stella.

By Stella's special invitation, Navie and her husband were guests at her house, and were to remain so until after her return from Europe, or Ted Earlscourt was called from the city.

"Good-morning, Mr. Brownell," answered Navie, failing to detect any ill-humor in his greeting. "Stella not out of bed yet? Why, it is quite eleven o'clock."

"I am by no means interested in the hour at which my wife chooses to rise, and have made no investigation as to whether she is in bed or not," he returned, coldly.

Navie looked at him in surprise.

"I am afraid Morpheus has not affected you well," she said, serenely. "You are as cross as—as—as two sticks."

Brownell frowned.

"I did not come here to have the state of my temper commented upon," he answered, severely.

"Didn't you?" asked Navie, with mock humility. "I'm so sorry I spoke. What did you come for, then?"

"Are you ready to obey me?"

"What a funny question."

"That is not an answer to it."

Navie stared at him.

"What are you talking about?"

"I asked you a simple question," he returned, sternly, "and shall be obliged for just as simple an answer."

Navie opened her eyes wide and regarded him in amazement.

"Mr. Brownell," she said, slowly, "have you suddenly lost your senses? I have not the least idea of what you are speaking of."

"You understand the English language, do you not?" he asked, sneeringly.

"Comparatively well."

"I asked if you are ready to obey me. It does not require a dictionary to explain those words."

Navie drew herself up with a hauteur that might have became an empress.

"In what way do you wish to be obeyed?" she asked, with freezing coldness.

"In anything which I may order you to do," he returned, firmly.

They stood before each other, and looked straight in each other's eyes, measuring their antagonistical strength.

"Why do you not speak plainly?" she asked, disdainfully. "There is a meaning underlying your words. Express it. I will listen."

"You are right," he answered, with a gesture expressive of his innate arrogance. "I wish you to watch my wife closely. Never for a single instant lose sight of her. Read every letter she receives or writes particularly, and report every act, every word to me."

He paused and regarded her curiously.

She had drawn herself to her full height, her magnificent eyes were flashing fire.

"And if I refuse?" she asked.

"Pardon me, but I do not think you will be foolish enough to do anything of the kind."

"Why?"

"None but an idiot would ask such a question, and you are not quite a fool."

"I begin to think that I am. Are you a gentleman, or a villain?"

"Either, when it suits my purpose," he answered, with perfect composure.

"With what do you threaten me? for foolish and impotent as I am in mind, I can see that a threat is conveyed in your every word and tone."

He shrugged his shoulders lightly.

"I threaten!" he repeated, mockingly. "I never threaten a—lady, until she refuses to do as I bid her."

"Well, I refuse positively and emphatically to be a spy upon your wife, who has been my best and truest friend."

Brownell laughed.

"How pretty!" he exclaimed contemptuously. "What

play is it from? The manner was superb. I wonder where the poor little, youthful street-singer learned it? Think again, *cara mia,* before you so 'positively and emphatically' refuse. I wonder how your honorable husband would like to hear the story of Navie Marble-head!"

Navie shrunk back, her pretty, bright face becoming blue as if with a chill, her teeth chattering.

"You—you surely would not do that?" she gasped.

"I hope you will not force me to," he returned carelessly.

"But you—you were the cause of my marrying him. You encouraged, almost coerced me."

"Did it never occur to you, with a brain so brilliant in executing deception, that I must have had my own reasons for so doing? Did you believe me so pure in thought and design, so full of Christian charity, as to be interested in you for your own sake? Pah! You cannot have believed me such a dunce!"

She looked at him for some time in amazed silence, scarcely believing the evidence of her own ears.

"You mean me to understand," she said hoarsely, "that unless I consent to your base terms, you will tell my husband of my awful past, after all you have said, all you have done?"

"I see that I have spoken plainly at last," he returned with mock ceremoniousness. "Do not doubt for one moment that I mean just that."

"You could not be so contemptible, so vile a scoundrel. You are merely striving to frighten me."

Again Brownell laughed with that low, villainous chuckle which was one of his characteristics.

"You compliment me," he said scornfully. "Come, we have talked long enough. Either consent to my terms, or refuse. In the event of refusal I shall go to your husband with your story and my proofs. Choose now, and quickly. What is your answer?"

For only one moment she stood in irresolution, then stood erect before him.

"My determination is made!" she said, firmly, but with intense pathos. "I will bear the burden of my own wrong-doing, and I will not add to it one jot, I will not increase it by one falsehood."

"You must remember how completely you are in my power."

"You are deceived. There is one refuge left me. What has been done I cannot undo, but it shall not be augmented; but this much I swear: Before he, my husband, shall shed one tear of grief, before his face shall be crimsoned by a blush of shame occasioned by any fault of mine, I will die. I will stab my heart rather than my husband's honor."

"Yes!" returned Brownell, ironically, "I've heard of a woman's courage many times. She swears and vows, and I know also how she keeps her pledges. Poisons, daggers, pistols, and the like, are charming in the perspective—oh, mere trifles!—but when the moment comes, she weeps, her hand trembles, and—she throws aside the weapon of self-destruction."

"Have you ever seen a desperate woman?"

She was bending forward now, looking at him with blood-shot eyes, in which he read an awful purpose.

He shuddered, but concealed it behind a smile.

It was not his purpose to drive her to extreme measures, but only to extort acquiescence to his wishes through her torture and fear.

"Many times!" he answered, with an affectation of the utmost *sangfroid*.

"Did they stop at trifles like death?"

"Not seen in a vista, as I tell you. But it is not so agreeable when the unforgiven sin is brought face to face with a cowardly spirit."

"The unforgivable sin of a life I have committed. Had I not just as well risk the mercy of God in a world of which I know nothing, as the curse of this world which, in the certainty of my little knowledge, is my all? My fear is my husband's hatred, my dread is his contempt. The limited minds of the wisest of mortal men do not prepare him for forgiveness of such sins as mine. My husband is not a god!"

"You love him, and are happy in his love. Then why not submit to my terms, and save yourself all future sorrow?" urged Brownell, with a change of manner.

"What guarantee have I that you would not demand more at any time?"

"My word!"

"Your word!" she repeated with infinite scorn. "I had rather trust my life upon the bosom of the ebbing tide which would bear me away to the wild, cold waters of the cruel ocean. What you have to tell him, what you know already, you may repeat, but you shall never add to your list of treachery against me one act of deceit or duplicity. You have my decision. Now do your worst. I do not defy you. I simply say that I will not betray my friend."

"And I will not accept that as your *ultimatum*. Take time to think. It is only a little thing which I ask of you, absolutely nothing when connected with a virtuous woman. Think of what you sacrifice. A whole life's happiness, and more—your husband's esteem. I ask you only to watch my wife and report her acts to me. Think it over. I believe you will alter your determination."

"Never!" she answered firmly. "There is no appeal against a decision like mine. My honor, tarnished and rust-eaten as it is, is at stake, and I will accept death in preference to sullying it further."

"Still I will not receive it as my answer. I will give you a few days' time."

He left the room as he ceased speaking, and she stood where he had left her, stunned, cold, numb, motionless.

After long minutes of emotionless, stubborn agony, she raised her arms above her head and turned her white, tortured face upward.

"It has come," she whispered in a voice hushed with anguish. "Now, oh, Lord! oh, God, pity me!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SEVEN days had passed.

Days of unending torture, of weary, dragging ages of pain to the *dramatis personæ* of this little play of real life.

Afraid to act according to the dictates of her own heart, lest she should place Philip's life even more in jeopardy, Stella remained at her home, almost holding her breath in fear of something, she scarcely knew what.

She wrote to Philip, explaining that it would be impossible for her to go to him and she had heard not one

word in reply, save one card from his mother, telling her that he was convalescing rapidly.

There had been no further mention made of any European trip, and she lived from day to day, utterly uncertain of the events which the following hour might bring, and ineffably miserable because of her awful apprehension.

And Navie? Only those who have sat in constant mortal terror, lest at any moment the waters of a horrible past may ingulf them, can understand or appreciate her hideous position.

Unwearied in his exertions to torment her into submission to his wishes, and determined to succeed now that he had taken his stand, Brownell allowed her scarcely a moment of peace or quiet. It was the same old story with Navie, only with increased anguish, a smiling face worn to muffle the death-chime ringing in her soul.

> "Behind no prison-grate, she said,
> Which slurs the sunshine half a mile,
> Live captives so uncomforted
> As souls behind a smile.
> God's pity let us pray, she said."

And Philip Pendennis was getting well. His very uneasiness of heart and mind had been an excellent tonic, and, finding himself alone one day, he put on his overcoat and hat and left the house.

His face was pale and cadaverous, while his large, dark eyes shone like brilliant stars. There was something positively appealing in his wan face, which, even more than ever, attracted attention for its striking beauty, that seemed almost to contain something supernal.

His steps, as he walked down the street, were not quick, and yet a certain nervous manner gave him the appearance of haste.

He scarcely knew where he was going, or what he was going for; he had no fixed purpose, but aimlessly walked along.

He turned into a side street and stopped short, almost as if forced to it from collision, for before him stood Brownell.

They faced each other, that illy matched pair, for a moment in silence. One showing in his delicate, re-

fined, intellectual face the evidence of ill-health, his arm still carried in its sling, but, nevertheless, exhibiting undaunted courage; the other, magnificent in his muscular, animal strength, a Hercules in body, a lilliputian in spirit.

And he, the animal, was the first to speak.

"I am glad to see that you are recovering," he said, grimly, a disagreeable, sneering smile distorting his lips.

Pendennis, always the gentleman, raised his hat with his left hand.

"Thank you," he answered, coldly.

"There will be no longer any reason why you should delay taking your satisfaction for the blow which you received at the club," said Brownell, anxious to explain his meaning.

"Suppose I do not wish it?" returned Pendennis, calmly.

Brownell's face grew crimson with rage.

"It is not possible," he said, with a grewsome countenance, "that you are such a coward and scoundrel."

For a moment all the mocking light died from Pendennis' handsome eyes and a dangerous fury sprung into them.

"You are right?" he answered, slowly. "I have no such desire. But let us seek some other cause for our quarrel. There is no necessity for bringing disgrace upon a lady's name."

"That lady's name is my care," replied Brownell, angrily, "and I consider myself fully competent to guard it. You thought little of her disgrace when you insulted her virtue in a public clubroom."

"I was a hot-headed fool," said Pendennis, shortly, as he remembered his foolish speech. "I spoke those words in her absence, and in her absence I make my apology. Not to *you*, you understand, but to her. As far as you are concerned, I am more than willing to meet you at any time."

"When your arm is well repeat that," returned Brownell, with a sneer. "You are safe in saying it now."

Again Pendennis' face crimsoned.

"Why need we wait for that?" he asked, haughtily. "I am not afraid to face you with my left hand."

"You are anxious for public sympathy," said Brownell, derisively.

"That is false!" exclaimed Pendennis, hotly.

"No, no! I will wait," answered Brownell, scoffingly, knowing full well that his tone would anger Philip into an immediate duel.

"You will do nothing of the kind!" he said, quickly. "If you have the courage you will fight to-day."

Brownell smiled exasperatingly.

"I don't think it can be a question of courage between you—and me! You are a sconndrel, who slipped into a friend's house, and while enjoying his hospitality, stole his wife's heart away—and yet you speak of courage."

For one moment Philip's whole frame quivered with anger, his fist clinched, and his eyes blazed fire.

"You have gone too far for any retraction for either of us," he said, his voice hoarse with rage. "Now one of us must die, and at once."

"You will not alter your determination?"

"Never!"

"You insist upon its taking place at once?"

"Immediately!"

"You will not change your decision?"

"Your question is an insult."

"Very well. You shall hear from me in half an hour. Meantime, have I your word of honor that you will not mention this to any one save the friend whom you may ask to act as second?"

"I have no desire to publish such an affair to the world. It is nothing of which either of us should feel proud."

"Since this affair is so much out of the ordinary," said Brownell, after a moment's thought, "suppose we settle the principal points of it ourselves? Any intimation of it to the police would, of course, end the matter."

Pendennis bowed.

"You shoot with your left hand?"

"As well as with my right," answered Pendennis, indifferently.

"That is well, as I believe pistols had already been decided upon. I know a capital place, only about an hour from the city, where the cars run regularly. It is out of the State. We can get a carriage and go directly to a

small wood which is about a mile from the village. It is very dense, and will suit our purpose exactly. Will that suit?"

"Exactly," answered Pendennis, carelessly. "May I be permitted a suggestion?"

"Decidedly!"

"What need have we for seconds? It is a little irregular, of course, but the whole affair is that. We are in no more danger, and the survivor's life is not placed in the hands of unnecessary witnesses. A surgeon whom you may choose will be sufficient. Do you not think so?"

"It is an excellent arrangement under the circumstances," returned Brownell, his eyes glittering with relief. "I know a man, an exceptionally good surgeon, who is worthy of all trust."

"Then there is another agreement which we might make. I think the one who falls will have no desire to have his opponent punished for a fault which was half his own; consequently, I propose that we each prepare a paper bearing the words, 'I die through my own fault,' or something to that effect, duly signed for the protection of the survivor. The surgeon may attend to it when the fortunate one has made his escape."

"I am more than willing," answered Brownell.

And indeed he was.

He knew his superiority as a shot to Pendennis, and handicapped as his antagonist was with a broken right arm and just having risen from a sick bed, there seemed not a chance or even the shadow of a chance against him.

And Pendennis believed so also. He had practiced with a revolver a few times, hitting the target more by accident than correct aim, and had never even handled a weapon with his left hand.

What chance had he? None, absolutely none! And yet that mistaken sense of honor which always governs men, held him in bondage, and he had no means and no desire to extricate herself.

And Brownell, with his little-souled, mean-spirited nature, was glad of his extra advantage, and gloried in the murder he would commit.

"I think that is all," said Pendennis, after a moment's pause, noticing with disgust Brownell's illy-concealed pleasure at his words.

"Yes, I think so. Let me see. It is now one o'clock. We will meet at C—— at three. Can you be ready and be there at that hour?"

"Easily."

"I will arrange all details. Until then——"

The two men lifted their hats to each other and passed on.

Many passers-by had noticed their conversation, but little thought that a life hung on the issue.

* * * * * * *

The train steamed into the small station, and from different cars the three men issued.

They were all well muffled in handsome, heavy coats.

The surgeon advanced, and having shook hands with Philip gave him directions for reaching their rendezvous.

They took separate carriages and dismissed them, before arriving at their destination, and at separate points.

"I suppose I shall have to be surgeon and second as well," said the third party, looking curiously at the two determined men: Philip, so pale, so evidently ill; Brownell, so robust, so thoroughly an animal.

"If you please," answered Philip and Brownell in a breath.

"Have you any letters, any messages which you wish to leave in my charge?" he asked.

They both handed him a folded paper which they had agreed upon.

"Now, shall it be the old arrangement of measuring ten paces, counting three, and, on the word 'fire,' turning from back to back, to face? I know almost nothing of these things."

"Will that suit you?" asked Brownell of Philip, courteously.

Philip answered by a gesture of assent.

The distance was measured, the men placed, with a bright-muzzled revolver in the hand of each.

The whole breath of earth seemed to be hushed and still over the terrible sacrifice about to be made.

"One—two—three!"

The men turned.

"Fire!"

The word was not much more than whispered, and yet the echoes took it up and flung it about on their myriad

tongues, but the sound was quickly drowned by the loud, death-carrying report of two simultaneously fired revolvers.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A STARTLED expression blanched the countenance of the surgeon when the smoke occasioned by the discharged revolvers had cleared away, for prone upon the ground lay both the men, instead of one, as he had expected.

He first made a superficial examination of Brownell's injuries, then, with a grave face, crossed to his antagonist. After a little more thorough examination than he had accorded the first, he threw back his head and laughed until the small but dense woods rang with his ill-timed mirth.

"To the death!" he said to himself aloud, drawing down the corners of his mouth in quiet ridicule. "A mortal combat! It needed no 'thumbs down,' as in the old gladiatorial days, for they were determined that one of them must die. Oh, ho, ho! Now, if I can just manage to get them separated before either of them returns to consciousness, and keep them in ignorance of each other's fate for awhile, we may be able to patch up this difficulty without more serious consequences."

He proceeded, as hurriedly as possible, to dress the two wounds, his face continuing to wear its ludicrous expression.

"It is funny!" he went on. "After all Brownell's remarks and high-flown utterances. It was a contemptible thing, though, for him to fight Pendennis, with his right arm disabled; but, then, Phil was always headstrong, and would have his own way. Brownell has got a little the worst of it, though neither of them have anything worse than a rather painful flesh wound in the shoulder. If I can manage to make them each a little sick, confine them to their rooms for a couple of weeks, and get things patched up a bit, all will go well perhaps! Well, the Lord looks out for the worst of us.

"Now, how am I going to manage to get these two rascals home? Special cars, of course; but what shall I do with them until I can get the cars? I shall have to

take one of those confounded drivers into my confidence, I suppose, perhaps both, as I can't trust them together much longer."

He arose, and, making his way as quickly as possible to the edge of the woods, he whistled shrilly for the carriages.

They both came rattling up about the same time.

The surgeon explained the situation as clearly as he deemed prudent, and asked their advice as to what had best be done with them temporarily.

"You can take one of them to my house," said one of the men. "It's a poor place, but it's near here, and you are welcome."

"And I guess I kin take the other in," volunteered the second driver.

"All right," exclaimed the surgeon briskly; "that will do nicely. Now, let us get them removed quickly."

They returned to the fallen men, both of whom were beginning to show signs of returning consciousness.

"This one first," said the surgeon, pointing to Brownell.

Gently as they could they raised him and carried him to the waiting carriage, then they returned for Pendennis and placed him in the other.

They were taken to the respective homes of the men, placed in bed, and made as comfortable as their meager surroundings would allow.

When Pendennis opened his eyes, the surgeon was standing over him.

A puzzled look came into his handsome face as he looked searchingly into the other's face.

"Well?" he asked. "Where is Brownell?"

The doctor turned aside his head and remained silent.

"Why do you not speak?" asked Pendennis, raising himself upon his elbow. "Surely I have not killed him?"

"You must not allow it to trouble you," answered the surgeon ambiguously. "The result was in the hands of God, and everything has happened according to His will."

Philip fell back upon his pillow, and a low moan escaped his lips.

"Poor Brownell!" he murmured. "How she will hate me now. I have settled my own fate. It would have

been happier for me the other way. And to think that it should all have happened as it has."

He covered his eyes with his hands and remained silent.

"You must not trouble your head about it," said the doctor uneasily. "You are not uninjured yourself, and you must remember that he had a more than even chance."

"That makes me none the less guilty of his death, doctor," answered Philip softly. "I am not afraid to fight, not afraid to sacrifice my own life, but I am a coward where my conscience is concerned; I am afraid to look my future life in the face, lonely, desolate, branded as it will be."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the doctor with some *brusquerie*. "You only defended yourself. Hardly that, when you only had your left hand for service. If he had not been a coward, he would have used his left hand against you."

"No, you are wrong," cried Philip quickly. "I insisted upon the duel. You see I am a terribly poor shot, and my hitting him was purely the result of accident. My whole life is ruined. I have no hope, nothing left which makes life worth living."

"What a stupid you are," exclaimed the doctor, in a quizzical manner. "One would think you were sorry that he did not kill you."

"I don't know but that I am," answered Philip, with a faint smile.

"Well, he was delighted when I told him that he had killed you!"

Too late the surgeon saw that he had betrayed himself, as those who talk too much invariably do. He saw his mistake at once, and looked in Philip's bewildered face with a comical smile.

"You mean——" began Philip, incredulously.

"Exactly!" answered the doctor, interrupting him.

"But I do not understand."

"Of course you don't."

"Will you not explain?"

"There is nothing to explain. You misunderstood me; that is all."

"Then Brownell is not dead?" anxiously.

"No!"

"He is badly wounded?"

"Not very."

"Doctor, for Heaven's sake, tell me what you mean?"

"Nothing! Brownell is wounded a little worse than you are, and thinks you are dead."

"Thank God!"

"For what?"

"That he is not dead. I could never have imagined the feeling occasioned by taking a human life, until I looked it in the face a moment since. Any calamity rather than that; any suffering which life may hold for me rather than the horror of feeling myself responsible for sending an unprepared soul into that awful, uncertain eternity.

* * * * * *

The "Hunchback" held the boards at the old Fifth Avenue, and Stella, the brightest star in the dramatic firmament, had already received her enthusiastic greeting from a packed and aristocratic audience.

She was even meeting with unusual success, as forgetful of her own sorrows, she threw her whole soul into the grief which disturbed the heart of the fair Julia.

"You are even surpassing yourself to-night," cried Navie, as she entered the "star dressing-room," and embraced her friend. "You are superb."

"Bah!" exclaimed Stella, deprecatingly. "What does her poor, little, miserable suffering amount to, when compared with the great, overshadowing misery which has darkened my life? I would be incapable of bearing sorrow, were I incapable of depicting so little. No actress' art, not even a woman's heart, is completed or perfected until it has been rounded by despair."

"But every heart considers its own agony the worst. The beauties of nature were made in the beginning, but increased by cultivation; so also with the tribulations of the soul. It is our capacity of endurance, the susceptibility of our natures to receive and understand sorrow, which regulates our share. What do you think a weak nature would do with a sorrow like mine? Lie down and die without an effort to endure the cleansing of spirit which a just God had seen fit to send. How much more I can bear, Heaven knows, but the weakness inherited

from our first mother will come to the surface at last, and I fear I shall give way and break down beneath the burden which I am not strong enough to bear. But He knows what is best and will forgive me when I fall upon my face and cry out from the depths of a soul purged of sin by sorrow—'oh, Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner.'"

Navie spoke with a freedom, a gesture, a grandeur of mien, which robbed her words of their simplicity, and gave to the pale, starlit face something of the expression of a mediæval prophetess.

Stella took her by the shoulders, and looked kindly but searchingly into her face.

"Be careful, child," she said slowly. "Concealed faults strike hardest. Secrets are like a nest of bees; they sting hardest when their presence is unsuspected. Don't cling to a falsehood because you have already told one."

"There are circumstances which sometimes seem to force us to measures, for Satan looks after his own. After it is once told, the surface of deceit hardens about us until it becomes almost impossible to break through. The trifling bands which at first bound us become fetters, and every hope, every desire, every love, every heart would have to be broken to let the leprous spirit through, that it may no longer cry, 'Unclean.' I pray God for courage, but I am faint and weak. I speak enigmatically, and as you love me, do not ask me to explain. Your acting has affected me to-night, and I am not myself. My error is a thing of the past, but unconfessed. You believe me, do you not?"

"Whatever your life has been, your heart is pure, and I love you. What am I that I should judge my sister?"

For one moment the two suffering women were locked in a warm embrace, and there were tears in the eyes of each as they separated.

"Third act!" cried the call-boy.

Stella left her dressing-room, and once more the play on the stage proceeded.

Sir Thomas Clifford, the hero of the play, entered. He presented a letter coming from the betrothed husband of Julia. The audience was hushed, breathless, as it watched the magnificent portrayal of conflicting senti-

ments presented by Julia's exquisite representative, as she recognized in her future husband's servant her former lover and her love.

But a change came over the perfect face, something like the hue of death, which spread its dull, green pallor even through a coat of *rouge*, and rendered a lovely woman for an instant almost hideous.

Not knowing what he was doing, the man who played the part of Clifford had brought a genuine letter upon the stage, and as she glanced at it she read the words:

"Pendennis and I have met. It is I who live.

"BROWNELL."

Only for one moment the lights seemed to fade, the stillness became a horrible pandemonium of sound, the harp-strings of the heart were caught and twisted into unrecognizable shapes by an unrelenting hand, and with one mortal burst of anguish the art of the actress triumphed, and the audience dreamed not of the horrible, sickening torture of their favorite, of the face-mask which hid a broken heart.

Had Brownell planned so hideous a revenge?

CHAPTER XXX.

"IT is God's judgment sent upon me for a contemplated sin," Stella kept whispering to herself. "How can I ever endure my life now? His death lies upon my conscience, for I am the only cause. Oh, my darling, I brought you only sorrow in life, and now I have brought you death, I, who would have lived in sackcloth and ashes to have spared you one pang even of regret."

She sat down in her dressing-room, when the play was finished, numb, paralyzed, feeling that all joy, all love, all hope, all life had left her. She did not weep, she did not agonize. A dead calm seemed to have settled over her, and not one wave, even of longing, seemed to ruffle the undisturbed surface of her cold, set face.

Galatea, after being deprived of the spirit of life, seemed no more marbleized.

Navie entered and found her.

She noticed the cold, gray pallor of the debonair face,

the heavy droop of the *svelte,* lithe form, and she was frightened.

"What is it?" she cried, springing forward and catching her friend in her arms.

"Philip is dead."

The words slipped through her lips as though she, too, were dead, and were spoken with an emotionless misery which startled Navie yet more.

"Dead!" she repeated, vaguely. "I don't think I understand."

"Dead!" answered Stella, stonily. "I have killed him at last."

"You—have—what do you mean?"

"For answer Stella turned wearily to her dressing-table and took up the cruel note which Brownell had penned, and handed it to her friend.

She sat down in a chair and let her head fall forward upon her knees, in the very abandonment of despair.

"Come," whispered Navie, when she had read and understood the note. "Come, my friend, my more than sister, you must not give way like this. Perhaps it is better so."

Stella raised her head and smiled.

Such a smile has sometimes shed its pathetic sweetness over a dead face, and tears have sprung to living eyes at sight of it which would have remained dry and unmoved over an expression of torture.

"Give way!" she repeated, calmly. "If I only could give way and weep until my heart was eased of its terrible pain. Dear God, it is only the pain here which makes me know that I live!"

She clasped her hands over her heart and crouched back in her chair, as if endeavoring to shrink away from herself.

Navie fell upon her knees and clasped Stella's waist in her arms.

"Let me tell you a secret," she whispered, softly, kissing the sweet, quivering face. "I, too, sorrow for him; I grieve with you over his loss, for Philip Pendennis was my brother!"

For one moment there was unbroken silence in the room, then Stella seized her friend by the shoulders and looked her firmly in the eyes.

"Your—what?" she asked, incredulously.

"My brother," answered Navie, softly. "He was the fortunate child, I, the concealed shadow of his father's error. My sex, upon which the curse of disobedience rests, made of me, and her who bore me, an outcast, while the world merely smiled leniently as it gently chided him for a fault."

"Did he—Philip—know?"

"Never!"

"I am glad you have told me," said Stella, clasping the kneeling girl in her arms. "It will be some comfort to me to have you near me, to know that you are flesh of his flesh. Oh, Navie, I loved him so! He was the breath of my soul, the poetry and music of my heart, the power, the spirit, the verve of my very life. My nature seemed to expand and glow with the very fire of life in his presence. I was something above and beyond my ordinary self; I seemed to go out of the world and live in a rarified atmosphere whose love was the love of angels, whose passion contained the essence of purity.

"My one thought was to be his! to throw myself at his feet; to fling aside the world; to give myself up body, life, and soul into his keeping; and yet mine was not unholy desire, but the craving of my spiritual nature, which had recognized its other half, which had been destined to complete a perfect whole. But the dry dust of death is scattered over him, and my only hope is that I may soon be summoned to join him where the only marriage is the crown-jewel of paradise—love."

Stella arose and extended her hand to the still kneeling girl.

"Come," she said, softly, her face irradiated until it seemed that a halo surrounded her perfect head. "Let us return to the world which demands hypocrisy, dissimulation, and deceit. We must not grieve—you for your brother, nor I for my hero. My heart may break in silence, but my lips must wear a smile, my face a mask. We must bury our sorrow and resurrect it only in the silence of the night. Come!"

They left the little room together, where one of them, at least, was privileged to bind a cyprus round her head, and returned to the palatial sepulcher whose sarcophagus bore hieroglyphical inscriptions of fraud and deception.

Brownell had been brought home and carried to his own chamber, and thither Stella went at his request.

Without a knock, she turned the knob gently and entered.

He was awake, and, with heightened color and an anxious, nervous expression in his steely-gray eyes, awaited her coming.

"You have been in no particular haste in visiting your wounded husband," he said sneeringly as she stopped in the center of the floor and looked at him interrogatively.

"I came as soon as I knew," she answered coldly.

"You received my note?"

Stella bowed.

"I thought you might be anxious, and sent it at once. Uxorious, was it not?"

Her manner, so emotionless, so freezing, was maddening to him, and he spoke with stinging sarcasm, but it struck the armor of her perfect self-control and glanced aside, leaving her apparently unconscious even of its contact.

"It was like you," she answered slowly, and a stranger would have been undecided as to whether she intended it as a compliment to his thoughtfulness or as a dagger thrust at his implacable cruelty.

"I wonder that I do not see you weeping and gnashing your teeth."

"The hardest blows strike deepest when they kill, and dead hearts make no sound."

She spoke in a hard, gelid tone which bore no trace of her suppressed suffering.

"Well," he said angrily, "what have you decided to do in the matter? A divorce from your lover's slayer is the first thing, I suppose, which will suggest itself to your plebeian nature."

"No," she answered, taking no notice of his insult, "I had not thought of it. In fact, now that I do think of it, I see no necessity for a separation, for even as we are, the North Pole and the Torrid Zone are not more widely apart. We may live in the same house forever, but there is a line of blood between us which deepens as it is approached. You may do as you like. You may give me my freedom or you may not do so, in order to

shield that noble name which you have branded with the epithet of murderer."

"You have decided according to the desires of a craving nature," he said as a dark flush covered his face. "It is not any wish to shield me from the comment of the world, but it is the harlequin in your nature which desires the splendid trifles, the gewgaws of life, with which to deck your person and your home."

"Surely you did not send for me for the pleasure of insulting me," she replied frigidly. "It is too much trouble for the pleasure it affords you, and besides, is no novel amusement. If you have finished, I think I shall retire."

"Go!" he exclaimed savagely. "But let me tell you before you go that I will find a way to subdue that stubborn will of yours or I will—kill you. I hate even more than I ever loved you. I forbid you going to that house to have any 'farewell looks' or lamentations, and you shall pay dearly for it in the event of disobedience."

She looked at him unflinchingly.

"I had not thought of it before, but since you suggest it I will go to see him for the last time when tomorrow comes."

He uttered a horrible oath, but she bowed with studious politeness, and left the room.

She had hardly done so when a knock sounded upon the door, and Earlscourt entered.

"What's up?" he asked, cheerily, as he advanced and shook hands cordially.

"A sprained shoulder," answered Brownell, somewhat shortly.

"A queer thing to put you in bed."

"Not at all. It is excessively painful."

"How did you do it?"

"Endeavoring to preserve a jewel in the guard-ring of my honor."

"I am not a Sphinx, but don't explain unless you wish."

"There is nothing to explain," returned Brownell.

"It is an extraordinary thing," said Earlscourt, thoughtfully.

"What is?"

"Why this evening, just after the performance, I went up to see Phil Pendennis for a moment."

"Yes," interrogated Brownell, with no apparent interest.

"By his request," continued Earlscourt, "I was shown to his room, and found him in bed."

"You—what?" asked Brownell, in consternation, raising himself upon his elbow, notwithstanding the twinges of pain in his shoulder.

"Yes," answered Earlscourt, "he was in bed, and said he had a sprained shoulder also. Now, isn't that an odd coincidence?"

"You say you saw him, and he spoke to you?" asked Brownell, incredulously. "I—I don't think I understand. What are you talking about?"

"What is the matter with you?" asked Earlscourt, surprised at Brownell's manner. "Is there anything so remarkable in my speaking to him? You are not getting delirious, are you?"

"No, of course not. But tell me, what is the matter with Pendennis?"

"A sprained shoulder."

"Nothing else?"

"Not that I heard."

"When did you see him?"

"I just this moment came from there."

"It is my confounded luck," cried Brownell, striking his hands together sharply. "A curse is on my life, but I will outwit even the devil himself. If I live he shall die, for the world is not large enough to contain us both."

With what prophetic accuracy we can oftentimes foretell an event, but the cause and the effect are inclosed in that mysterious Godly palm which covers and conceals it.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"Mr. Pendennis, your mother is ill, dying, perhaps, and is calling for you. Can you come to her?"

Philip Pendennis' room had been entered by his valet, who spoke in an excited undertone, quite different from his usual well-trained calmness.

"Ill!" repeated Philip, in alarm. "Give me my dressing-gown quickly."

"But your shoulder!" weakly expostulated the valet.

"Never mind that. Has Haldane been sent for?"

"Yes, sir. He and two other physicians are with her now. We left you undisturbed as long as possible."

Waiting to hear no more, Philip hurried away, supported by his devoted valet, to his mother's presence.

By her side, as she reclined upon the bed, her white-haired husband sat, and the doctors, with grave faces, stood about the room.

One glance at her told Philip all.

The set, glazed eyes, the drooping mouth, the gray, loamy face were their own evidence of the presence of death.

Forgetful of his own pain in this sudden knowledge of his great loss, Philip fell upon his knees beside his mother and buried his face in the clothes of the bed.

A smile came over the numbing features as the hand, already growing chill, fell lovingly upon the soft hair of the bowed head.

"Don't weep; it is better so," she said slowly and with a great effort.

The sound of the voice he had loved so well recalled his self-control, and he staggered again to his feet.

"Can nothing be done for her?" he asked hoarsely, looking appealingly at the doctors.

"All that mortal man can do has been done," answered Haldane solemnly. "She has angina pectoris, and we have fought it for years, to be beaten at last, as you see. It is at all times a most dangerous disease; but when connected with ossification of the heart, as in this instance, the result is almost always fatal."

"It is useless, Philip," murmured his mother gently, "and it is better so. I have that to say to you which must be said at once and alone. Will you request them all to leave us?"

Too much overcome to obey, Philip dropped his head and sobbed aloud; but his father had heard, and it was he who complied with his dying wife's request.

"Come," he said to the physicians brokenly, "let her have her desire. Only God can help her now. Let us leave them."

He had not loved her very dearly in life, and yet she was the companion of his youth and his age, and it was hard to part with her now after all the years passed together, and it brought that awful heritage of man before him with frightful distinctness.

Mother and son were left alone.

With a terrible effort she turned her dying eyes upon that one whom in life she had loved so well, but had wronged so deeply, and the light of a great fear came into them which almost choked out death itself.

"Philip, my darling," she said slowly and painfully, "listen, and do not moan so. I have much to say, and little time and less strength. Listen, dearest! The wrong I have done you through my senseless, stubborn pride has killed me. Do not start! It has preyed upon my heart until that heart has become a stone."

"You refer to—Stella?" he asked brokenly.

"Yes," she answered, but the word was not more than a breath.

"Do not speak of it. You did nothing."

"Hush! You do not know. You need never know, for she is too true, too good ever to tell you; but I could not go into the presence of my Maker with that horrible falsehood upon my soul."

"You mean——"

"I mean that I spoke falsely. She is a noble woman, who sacrificed her love to save its object from what she believed to be a threatened disgrace."

"I—I do not understand."

"I told her a lie, a hideous, shameful lie. I demanded you at her hands, but she scorned me; I pleaded, but she was obdurate; then I saw her disposition, and played upon it. Your father was in danger of losing a large sum of money. I remembered that, and used it with an addition which has cost you both your life's happiness. I told her that your father had used the bank's funds, which he could not replace, and that unless you married Winifred he must go to the penitentiary."

"Mother!"

The exclamation was only a word, and yet the scorn, the horror, the disgust and loathing which the tone contained could not have been more perfectly expressed in volumes.

But one look into the piteous, pleading, dying eyes was enough for the gentle heart of the noble, though suffering-warped son, and almost before the word was spoken he bent forward and kissed her.

The relief, the smile of content and happiness, more than repaid him for his sacrifice.

"You forgive me?" she whispered.

"I forgive you," he repeated softly. "It is not too late to atone to her. Poor girl, poor, pure, noble, generous Stella, how I have made her suffer! but, with God's help, I will cease to tempt her and help her to be the angel she has striven so hard to be."

"That is like you," gasped the dying woman, "my dear, dear boy! I feel already as though ages of care and sin and fear had been lifted from me. If I only had her forgiveness and God's I could die easily."

"I will speak for her, but God is here, ask Him yourself."

He spoke with a reverential solemnity, which was almost awe-inspiring.

Before she could reply, a terrible spasm of pain seized her, and Philip summoned the physician.

The cold dew of agonizing death broke over her brow, and she writhed in the frightful torture of bodily suffering.

What men could do for her relief was done, but it was too late.

With the last rallying effort of life, she raised herself, and, stretching out her arms to that merciful Father whom she saw with spiritual eyes, which were struggling to be free, cried:

"Dear God, Thou art just! I have suffered, only Thou knowest how much. Be pitiful!"

Before any arm could encircle her to draw her back upon her pillow, the soul broke its bonds, and wended its way into the great unknown.

Early the following morning a woman, somberly but richly dressed, her face covered with a heavy veil, paused before the door of the mourning-draped mansion.

"It is all true," she muttered, as the streamers of crape fluttered in the breeze, and uttered its own voiceless tale of grief.

She mounted the steps and sought admission.

"Let me see Mrs. Pendennis," she said, in a voice choked with emotion. "She would wish it," she added, as the servant paused in an uncertain way.

The man bowed, and led the way to the chamber of death.

He opened the door, and closed it again, as she passed in, leaving her in the darkened room where, upon a bier, rested the mortal remains of the woman who had wronged her.

With trembling fingers she loosened her veil, and dropped it from before her quivering face.

She uttered a low moan, which attracted the attention of a young man, who sat with bowed head beside the woman whom he had reverenced and loved.

He recognized the visitor, and rising to his feet, he extended his arms in wordless welcome.

And she saw him standing there before her with the mournful smile upon his face, his form draped in a long black dressing-gown, and to her fever-distraught brain he had risen from the dead to greet her.

"Philip," she said, in an awe-struck whisper, creeping closer to him. "Oh, Philip, speak to me!"

"It was good of you, my darling, to come to me in my sorrow. It is what she would have wished."

There was a deep, melancholy solemnity about his voice, and, still misunderstanding, she crept on until she put out her hand and touched him.

Then the knowledge that it was a material being who stood before her came to her, and, in the revulsion of feeling, a loud, prolonged scream rang through the stilled apartment.

"Philip! not dead!" she cried, joyously. "Oh, thank God! thank God!"

"What was it you thought?" he asked, soothingly, as he caught her to his breast.

"He told me you were dead. Oh, Philip, Philip!"

She threw her arms about his neck and wept passionate tears upon his bosom.

He allowed her to weep, holding her closely, and smoothing the bright, pretty hair, from which her hat had fallen, and she recovered her composure sooner.

"Who is it?" she gasped at last, pointing to the winding-sheet.

"My mother," he answered, solemnly. "She told me all, Stella, and her story to you was false. Can you forgive her, darling, as I have done?"

"I forgive her, now that you know, Philip."

"But can you ever forgive me for what I have made you suffer? How you must have despised me."

"Ah, how could I? My heart was too full of love to admit of any other feeling."

"I have wronged you, my pure, true love," he cried, kissing her face with a holy calm, "but over the body of her who parted us, I swear that I will tempt you no more. I will help you all in my power to live up to that innate purity which has always been your most lovable characteristic."

He paused and looked at her.

The light of an awful fear had crossed her perfect face.

"Philip," she whispered, hoarsely, "what are you saying?"

Her meaning dawned upon him without further words and he covered his eyes with his hand to shut out the sight of her suffering.

"That I will have strength enough for both," he answered, with a painful effort. "It will cost me my life, but oh, my darling, my lost love!"

The effort was too much for him and he sunk into a chair and sobbed aloud; great, heart-breaking, convulsive gasps of agony.

She knelt by his side and laid her arm around his neck.

"We cannot live apart, Philip, you and I," she whispered, slowly. "I see now how more than impossible it would be. Philip, I am yours as you are mine. Goodbye now, love, our parting is not for long."

She arose and crossed to the door. She mechanically replaced her hat, and with one bursting sigh, she opened the door and passed out.

CHAPTER XXXII.

As Stella entered her own home and crossed the hall to her boudoir, she was stopped by the sound of a heavy voice, calling her name through a half-closed door.

"Stella! I wish to see you."

She pushed open the door and looked in.

Upon a couch her husband lay, his long limbs stretched out to their fullest extent, his head supported by his hand. His clothes were on, but raised from one shoulder by bandages, which gave him a peculiarly one-sided appearance. His eyes were heavy, his breathing thick and quick.

"Where have you been?" he asked, roughly.

She smiled serenely.

"Where I have learned to trust my husband's word," she answered, contemptuously.

"You have been to see Pendennis?"

"Yes!"

"How dared you!" he cried, excitedly.

She continued that mocking smile, without condescending to reply.

Forgetting his wound in his anger, Brownell raised himself to a sitting posture.

"Don't you know that I will kill you?" he exclaimed, fuming with rage.

"You kill!"

Hundreds of words could not have expressed more scorn than was conveyed in that brief sentence.

"Silence!" he thundered.

"Raoul Brownell," she said, calmly, "I am here by your desire, not my own, Heaven knows. Voluntarily I would never look upon your mean, false face again. While I am here you must treat me with respect, or I leave. Now, what have you to say to me?"

"Who are you that dares to speak to me as though you were an empress? A harlequin who has been taught fine manners from your mimic life on the stage. From infancy you nursed from the bottle of deception, hypocrisy, and fraud, and it has been so instilled into your nature that, together with your inheritance, nothing better could be expected. Love blinds the eyes, and you bewitched me by your cursed beauty into forgetfulness of your plebeian origin and miserable profession."

"I have requested you many times to leave my profession out of our discussions," said Stella, haughtily.

"What care I for your requests, think you? The world called me a fool for marrying you, and I have long

ago determined that I deserved the epithet. How does society regard you and your kind? If they condescend to notice you at all, it is as they would regard a freak of nature, or some unusual animal, as a curiosity from that world upon which their door is closed to prevent the contaminating atmosphere from reaching them.

Stella laughed coldly.

"Your remarks are too puerile to deserve a reply," she said slowly, "but I should like to see the record of any of your 'society' ladies' lives, even as ours are recorded. Our follies would be almost virtues compared with theirs. But the nineteenth century mantle of charity, *bought with gold*, is thrown over their heinous sins, and the voice of scandal is coughed into silence. Give me the life which can stand the light of day, even if it should show imperfections, in preference to that sickly, sallow, consumptive thing which exhibits itself only in gaslight, and thereby conceals its hideous distortions. Bah! The world is welcome to its full knowledge of my sins, and if I must bear part of the blame of an erring sister, I am willing. Whatever we are, we cannot be accused of delusions and hypocrisy. I am an actress, and I glory in it."

"No doubt you expected that to bring you a tremendous round of applause, but I am in no humor for heroics. Now cease your acting, and be a woman for once if you can."

Stella drew herself up proudly and looked at him with quiet scorn.

"Sit down!" he exclaimed, ignoring her disdain.

"Thanks, no!" she returned coldly.

"But I have something to say to you."

"I can listen standing."

"But I wish you to be seated!"

"And I—will not!"

He looked at her for one moment, his anger at white heat, but controlling his passion, he sank back again upon the couch from which he had partially arisen.

"Well, since you wish it," he said contemptuously, "stand as if you were my slave, and listen."

She bowed calmly in return for his insolence, but did not move.

"There are reasons, apart from any sentiment"—

sneeringly—"which will take me out of the country for some time. You understand?"

"Yes."

The word was uttered so listlessly that it thoroughly exasperated him.

"I will leave the early part of next week," he announced, controlling his anger by a violent effort.

"Yes?"

"You will be ready to go with me!"

"I?"

"You."

"I don't think I understand."

"My language is of the plainest Anglo-Saxon," he returned, tartly. "You go with me!"

"Is it not just possible that you may be mistaken?" she asked, elevating her eyes with some defiance.

"Not at all."

"Think again."

"Speak plainly. Do you mean that you refuse?"

"Decidedly."

"But I command you!"

"That has not the smallest effect."

"You dare to thwart me?" he asked, his voice calm with rage.

"I dare!" she answered, coolly.

"But I will force you!" he cried, savagely.

"Try it!" she returned, with a short laugh.

He arose from his seat unsteadily and came toward her.

"Don't exasperate me too far!" he exclaimed, hoarsely. "I am not ready to kill you yet."

She laughed again, in a sweet, musical, thoroughly amused way.

"Upon my word, Raoul, you grow more ridiculous every day. Kill me, indeed! You might have the courage to telegraph to some female that you had killed me, but you would not have the nerve to do it."

He uttered a low exclamation of rage and sprung toward his wife, but she stepped aside and avoided the heavy blow which would have fallen upon her face.

"Coward!" she said, through her set teeth. "If that is the evidence of your high birth and social training, I thank God that I am a bohemian."

"Listen to me," he cried, his voice so heavy with anger as to render it almost inaudible. "I am going to leave this country. Why, matters not to you, but you go with me. By your will or contrary to your desire, makes no difference! Consent to go willingly and all will be well; refuse and I shall confine you to your room until I obtain your consent, if you starve there. Now, what is your answer?"

"No!"

The word was so firmly spoken that it needed no addition to give it strength.

"Remember, then, that I keep my word."

"Pouf! Do you think I am such a fool as that? Have you grown so weak-minded that you can see no difference between the present day and the Middle Ages? Your house, although almost a palace, has no subterranean passages for the confinement of persons who displease your lordship. The privileges of our sex are not very extended, but we are not bowed down before our masters, with their feet upon our necks as formerly. We have the strong-minded women to thank for that much at all events. My dear, you may do your worst. I am not afraid."

"But if I lock you in, what recourse have you?" he asked, hotly.

"The windows first," she answered, serenely.

"You would never dare to so publish your disgrace."

"Oh, yes, I should," she returned, calmly. "You forget that I am an actress. It would give me a capital advertisement. To-morrow I should see myself in big type, 'Stella, the Star, in a New Part;' 'A scion of a Noble Family is the Heavy Villain.' Do it, Raoul! It would be great."

Goaded almost to madness, he struck her a blow in the chest which sent her staggering across the room with awful force.

"Take that!" he howled. "It will teach you who is master here and who intends to remain so. It is only a small sample of what you will get in case you rebel again."

Slowly and with painful effort Stella regained her equilibrium.

"You have accomplished at last what you began the

first day of our marriage, that is, to make me thoroughly despise and loathe you. All effort to be an honest wife is at an end. You have threatened my life, now listen to me! Ever dare repeat what you have done to-day, and as there is a God above us, I will kill you!"

As she uttered the last words she turned toward the door, and Aldin, her husband's valet, stood upon the threshold.

How much he had heard, or how little, she knew not, neither did she care.

She had spoken lightly, foolishly, unthinkingly in her anger; it was only an idle threat, and yet——

CHAPTER XXXIII.

STELLA swept by her husband's servant as though she had been a young queen, and he looked after her in blank, bewildered amazement.

"The tigress!" exclaimed Brownell under his breath, but loud enough for his man to hear. "She is fiend enough to keep her word if she gets an opportunity."

"Aldin," he said aloud, with affected embarrassment, "will you request Mrs. Earlscourt to come to the library to see me at once? Then return and assist me there."

The servant bowed and departed upon his errand, returning almost immediately.

"Mrs. Earlscourt will be down in a moment, sir," he announced respectfully.

"Is her husband in?"

"No, sir."

"Give me your arm."

Supported by it Brownell descended the stairs slowly, the pain in his shoulder giving him considerable trouble, but he made no sign as, five minutes later, Navie entered the library.

She wore a charming loose gown of crimson satin, held in place with huge cords of yellow silk, half concealed by billows of foamy lace. The open throat and loose, flowing sleeve completed an exquisite picture as she stood before him, the warm tint of her frock throwing a shade of color into her pale cheeks and lending additional brilliancy to her handsome eyes.

"You wished to see me?" she asked, coldly, to conceal her nervousness.

"Yes. You are lovely enough this morning for any man to wish to see."

"I think compliments may be dispensed with between you and me," she answered, calmly.

"No," said Brownell, more to annoy her than from feeling, "they may not. I think, Navie, if I had not been egregious fool enough to fall in love with my wife, that I should have selected you."

"What an exceedingly great honor I have missed," she answered, with an almost imperceptible sneer.

But it did not fail to reach Brownell's acute perception.

"Did it ever strike you, my dear," he said, slowly, with smoldering fire in his steely eyes, "that I am scarcely a man to anger?"

"I have no desire to anger you."

"Then why speak as you do?"

"Of what use," she asked, with trifling irritation, "is it to prolong a conversation which is of no interest to either of us, and only creates unpleasant feeling?"

"Possibly none."

"Then will you allow me to retire?"

"No."

He smiled tantalizingly, and, with an uncontrollable gesture of annoyance, she stood silently before him.

"Are you ready to listen to me and to obey me?" he asked, calmly.

"I am ready to listen!"

"Ah, you emphasize the word! I think, though, my pretty one, you will not hesitate to obey when you know that I have no intention of being trifled with."

"Speak!"

Had her life depended upon it, she could not have articulated more than the one word. She clasped her hands in dumb, agonized expectation, and remained motionless before him.

He was not slow to perceive, and her suffering pleased his brutal fancy.

"How pretty you are, with that expression in your great eyes," he said insolently. "Now, listen. You have heard, no doubt, of my duel with Pendennis."

"I read your cruel note to your wife."

He smiled grimly.

"Do you also know that he is not dead?"

"My husband told me."

"Did you inform my wife?"

"No. I went to her room for the purpose of doing so this morning, but she was not there."

"Do you know where she was?"

Navie was silent.

"Answer me!" he thundered.

"I will not," she returned calmly.

He looked at her critically for a moment, then said:

"Never mind, I know. She told me herself. Now, what I wish you to do is this. I expect to leave the country the early part of next week, when you will be rid of my hateful presence forever. There are reasons, apart from jealousy, which render it imperative, that Stella should have no words with Pendennis between now and then. I furthermore suspect that she may endeavor to avoid going with me. I wish you to remain with her every hour. Report to me every move which she makes and every line she writes. I do not wish you to do this out of idle curiosity or jealousy, but there are strong, very strong reasons for it."

He paused and waited for her to speak.

"I cannot do it, Mr. Brownell!" she said at last, in scarcely an audible voice.

"It will bring no harm to her," he said, endeavoring to choke his rising anger. "It is for her good, to save her reputation, which she seems bent upon blasting. Some day she will thank you."

"I repeat that I cannot do it. I cannot play the part of Judas and kiss while I betray. I cannot be the deadly asp which stings the bosom which warms it."

"But I am the one who has sheltered you from harm and given you the protection of a husband's name."

"To gratify your own ends, to accomplish your own purpose," she cut in. "Weak fool that I was, not to see and understand."

"You will not do as I request?"

"Do not say 'will not,' I cannot!"

"What weak sentimentality is this? The first consideration which the world holds is the first person singular. Think of yourself."

"What am I without my honor?"

"Your—honor?"

The inflection upon the last word could have contained no greater insult. It brought a flush of burning shame to the cheeks of the beautiful woman before him.

"I have requested, now I command," he continued, sternly. "Refuse and I——"

"Will tell my husband of his wife's disgraceful past," interrupted Navie, hoarsely, and with intense pathos. "I am at your mercy; I am humbled, a sufferer, and a —woman. Do your worst, I am powerless to help myself."

"Why will you submit, when you could so easily save yourself?"

"I cannot add to my guilt an act of treachery."

For one moment amazement held him dumb.

He gazed in wonder at the woman who would dare so much for the sake of honor, then determined that come what would, he would bend her stubborn will and make it subservient to his own.

"Then I go to make your husband acquainted with your honorable past, which will fill his nostrils with the odor of sweet spices. No, I will grant you the privilege of speaking in your own defense, mark my generosity, and will tell him in your presence."

He arose to touch the bell which would call a servant to the room, but, quicker than thought, she snatched a dagger from her bosom.

It was a curiosity which her husband had purchased to use as a "property" in his profession. If he could only have foreseen its use.

"Spare yourself the dishonor and him the disgrace," she cried, in a quivering, agonized voice, as she drew the dagger back to make the fatal plunge.

An instant later her crimson robe would have been stained to a darker hue, but catching her hand as it descended, he wrested the dagger from her grasp, and dropped it at his feet.

"Rash woman!" he cried, surprised beyond measure at her mad act. "What would you do?"

"What you knew I would do if you persisted in your hideous design," she exclaimed wildly.

"But I will prevent you."

"You cannot! With my own hands I would strangle back the breath which is a pollution and tear out the heart which is the foul shrine of his worship."

"You speak irrationally and distractedly."

"But the truth!" she interrupted firmly, bending fiercely toward him. "If you do not wish to be my murderer, tempt me no further!"

Brownell laughed scornfully.

"What care I for your death, think you?"

"Nothing, oh, nothing! Why should you care for me? But he is different. Think of him!" she cried pleadingly. "You are human, you have loved. Pity him! Oh, dear God, what he will suffer! See, I am on my knees to you, pleading for what is more than my life, my husband's love. Grant me this one thing. It is so little to you, such a very little thing, but so much to me. Ten thousand times more than life. Promise me that you will not do it."

"If you will consent to do as I say. You will?"

"I cannot," she gasped. "He would hate me even worse."

"That is your final answer?"

"It must be! Oh, have mercy!"

"You will not think again?"

"I cannot. Pity, pity, I implore you!"

"It is enough!"

He raised his hand to strike the bell.

"Have you no compassion?" she cried frantically.

"None! none!"

A second more and his hand would have descended upon the bell, but with the quick plunge of a pantheress she seized the dagger from the floor, and with a power lent by maniacal fury, she buried it to the hilt in his breast.

"Take that, tyrant!" she cried in a sharp, quivering voice.

Without one word, without a groan, he threw up his hands and fell backward—dead!

The reeking dagger fell from her hand, and still the hand raised poised in mid-air, her face more set and motionless than the face of the dead.

Then a laugh—wild, mirthless, frightful—burst from

her ghastly lips, and in a hideous, cracked, rasping voice, she shrieked out:

"Murderess!"

She turned at the sound of her own voice, and bit at the hand which involuntarily approached her mouth. Then her eyes wandered back to the prostrate form of him who one moment before had been a man.

"Now rise, ye demons of the lower world," she cried, with terrible mirth. "'Tis a murderess calls you. She who has signed in blood the compact which makes her yours forever. Rise, and shriek aloud as I do; the murderess is your own. Come, now, my husband, you who have loved and trusted, and learn what she is who has deceived you. Ha! it comes! That gliding, red thing that makes its way from the hideous hole which my hand planted in his breast. It will surround and ingulf me. It has become myriad-throated, and screams aloud, 'Murderess! Accursed!' I will escape ye. I have had my banquet of blood, and I defy you!"

She caught up her skirts and turned and fled. Fled from the chamber where she had lost her last chance of happiness, if not of life eternal!

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE awful scene had had a dumb, horrified, benumbed witness.

Sitting among her exquisite flowers, endeavoring to draw some map of her future action, was Stella.

For some time she remained unconscious of the conversation which was taking place in the room adjoining her conservatory. The parties were immediately before her eyes, requiring no move of her head to see their every motion, and yet she saw them as in a dream.

As the altercation grew louder, her attention was drawn, and, unthinkingly, at first, she listened; then, becoming petrified with surprise, she was unable to speak.

As that fatal blow was struck, she staggered to her feet in wildest amazement, then dropped back in her seat again, overcome with the horror of the situation.

Utterly powerless, nerveless, motionless, she sat, her eyes staring, her face pale unto ghastliness.

She was aroused from her stupor by the violent closing of the library door.

With a long, quivering sigh she arose again, and, moving almost involuntarily, she crossed the room and approached the body of the fallen man.

She knelt beside him, taking no notice of how her dark dress was becoming saturated with his life-blood. She placed her pretty white hands above his heart and drew them away, dripping with the crimson tide.

"Poor Raoul!" she cried, with a convulsive shudder. "It is all my fault—all. As surely as if I had struck the blow I am his murderess!"

The last words came from her pale, set lips with a wail which resembled the moan of a winter wind as it sighs in contrition over the sins of those who have not the grace to weep for themselves. One is the cry of the human soul—the other the voice of God which speaks on earth.

And in the midst of her self-accusation, denunciation, and despair the door opened to admit her maid, Clochette.

Instantly the situation dawned upon her, and, with a shrill scream of terror, she flew across the room to the side of her mistress.

The cry aroused the entire household, and servants began to pour upon the scene.

In the center of the room stood Clochette supporting her half-fainting mistress. Blockading the doorway and crowding into the blood-stained room were the terror-stricken servants; and so Earlscourt found them when he entered the front door a moment later.

"What has happened?" he asked one of the number in alarm.

"Mr. Brownell!" gasped one of them.

"What of him?"

"Dead!"

"Dead!" he repeated, in amazement, pushing his way through them into the room.

He caught sight of Stella as she stood shrinking and trembling before them all, and the light of an awful fear came into his eyes.

But he quickly banished the appearance of any accusa-

tion against her even if the terrible doubt still remained.

"You here?" he asked, almost tenderly, as he drew her hand protectingly through his arm. "You should not witness such a sight as that. It is bad enough for men. Come with me."

Without resistance, and in silence, she allowed him to lead her from the room.

"Some of you inform the authorities. Aldin, you take charge and direct them what to do," he said, under his breath, as he passed the throng of huddled, frightened servants.

Almost carrying her, he led Stella to her own room.

Once there, the thought of him, her early friend, and the suffering this horrible thing would occasion him, if it were ever known, struck Stella almost like a blow.

"Ted," she cried, putting her arms around his neck, all stained as they were with blood, and shivering from head to foot, "oh, Ted, my more than brother, how sorry I am!"

The simple words were spoken with such deep grief, that he, misunderstanding their import, took her in his arms and pressed her lovingly to his breast, while quick, blinding tears sprung to his eyes.

"It can make no difference in my love and esteem," he answered, sadly, kissing her tenderly. "Nothing upon earth could ever do that."

"I am glad, very glad, my noble, generous friend!" she cried, earnestly.

So earnestly, that again he was deceived.

"Go to her," she whispered, timidly. "I should like to be alone. Be more kind, more gentle than you have ever been. Do not conceal your love. Bear with her nervous dreads, for, oh, Ted, we women have such griefs to endure!"

"I know, dear," he replied, tenderly, again misunderstanding her meaning.

He pressed her hands affectionately and left at her desire. Left her, and returned to the wife he deemed so pure, so true, whom he had left with his kisses warm upon her lips not an hour before.

He found her crouched in a chair, her teeth chattering, her eyes wildly bright.

"You have heard?" he asked, advancing and taking her in his arms.

She nodded, utterly unable to find voice for any other reply.

"Poor Stella!" he murmured, brokenly.

She shuddered violently.

"You should go to her."

"I cannot."

The words were spoken quickly and in a short gasp, as those which come last from the dying, but it loosened the cord which tied her tongue, and she cried aloud:

"The shame, the grief, the despair would kill me!"

"Do not say so," he exclaimed chidingly. "For, next to you, I love her."

"What do you say?" said Navie, falling on her knees before him, and clasping his hand in both her own. "You love me, love me?"

"Why, darling, this has upset you strangely. Do you doubt my love?"

"But you love me still, *still* love me," she repeated hoarsely. "Say but that *still, still* you love me, and I will bless the cursed fate which surrounds us."

"You speak incoherently, my dearest," he answered soothingly. "I love you still, as I have always, shall always love you. You are my own, my love, my wife."

With a startling cry she sprung to her feet and threw her arms around his neck.

"Thank God for that!" she exclaimed with deepest gratitude. "I fear nothing now."

"You will go to Stella now, my darling, will you not? It is unkind for us to leave her alone."

"I will go."

She kissed him lingeringly, passionately many times, and he returned to the library.

For some minutes she stood where he had left her, her hands clasped over her aching heart.

"He does not know," she whispered to herself. "He does not guess my hideous guilt. Why need he ever know? I will hide it, hide it until the wrath of God finds me out, and strips me of happiness, of honor, and of love. But I will have his love while I may. I must go to her—his wife—now. Oh, courage, courage!"

Supporting her fainting spirit as best she could, she sought the room of the woman who had been her friend.

Stella sat with bowed head, and did not hear her entrance until Navie stood beside and touched her.

Then she looked up, and the two women regarded each other in silence for one moment.

Navie was the first to speak, and the tone was so low, so hushed, that it scarcely reached Stella, notwithstanding her proximity.

"Your husband is dead!" she said simply.

"He is dead!" repeated Stella mechanically.

There was no life, no warmth, no feeling in the tone, and yet it was sadder far than tears.

"How can I—tell you—of my sorrow?" gasped Navie, scarcely able to speak.

"There is no need, I know."

"Do you also know—that I love you? You who have been so gentle and kind to me. Do you not know that I would lay down my life for you?"

There was a brief pause, then Stella answered, with emotion:

"Yes, I know."

"Stella, darling friend, do you regret that—he is—no more?"

There was quivering earnestness in the voice which told that it came from the soul.

"Regret is not the word," answered Stella, in a pathetic monotone. "If my life could recall his, I would give it freely, gladly."

"And yet you did not love him!"

"I did not."

"Then why——"

"At a time like this we forget the attributes of selfishness in our own natures, and remember those who must live and—suffer. Dear God, how impotent is the word to express the consequences of thy wrath."

Navie shuddered.

"Do you know—do you suspect who has—committed—the awful act?"

Stella arose and stood before her, almost majestic in her wonderful beauty and sympathy.

"It would have been so much better," she said slowly,

"if you had only trusted me in the beginning. Do not endeavor to deceive me now."

A green haze seemed to creep slowly over Navie's face, a wild, hunted look came into her eyes, her lips were covered with a foamy white, like those of a person in a fit.

"You know——" she began, but could get no further.

"I saw all!" answered Stella solemnly.

With a moan of anguish Navie threw up her hands and fell upon the floor, crouching and groveling in her terrible agony.

"Lost! Lost!" she cried out to her own soul in a voice vibrating with terror and despair.

"No," answered Stella, raising her in her strong young arms, "you are not lost. Calm yourself, Navie, your life and your husband's happiness depends upon it."

The poor girl strove with all her might to suppress the awful, tearless sobs which arose in her throat and almost suffocated her.

"Calm yourself, and tell me all," continued Stella, with tender compassion.

"You do not despise me?"

"I pity and love you."

"God bless you for those words. Oh, Stella, if you only knew what agonies I have endured because of him! But I never thought of this. So help me, God! the temptation never even entered my brain. I meant to kill myself, but never him, never! never! It came to me with a sudden rush of feeling and, without a thought, I did it. You will not betray me? Oh, for the love of God, swear it!"

"I do swear! Whatever comes, my lips shall be sealed. I will not speak!"

CHAPTER XXXV.

"While Navie was telling Stella the secret of her unhappy life, the scene down-stairs was utter confusion.

The coroner had arrived, and after making a thorough examination of the room, the situation of the body and all the legal detail of the unfortunate case, he gave a permit for the removal of the body and its proper preparation for the grave.

Then he impaneled a jury, and, after having sworn them in and appointed the following morning for the inquest, he turned to Earlscourt.

"It seems a most extraordinary case," he said, thoughtfully. "Nothing in the room is disturbed. It could not have been robbery at this hour in the morning. What is this?"

From under a heavy desk a slight portion of the handle of the weapon, with which the wound had been inflicted, protruded. He picked it up.

"Did you ever see that before?" he asked.

But Earlscourt had grown livid, and it was with strange hesitation that he answered:

"The dagger is mine."

"Yours? How came it here?"

"I cannot tell."

"You mean you will not?"

"No. I do not know."

The coroner looked at him critically, and answered, slowly:

"Think before to-morrow. I am interested in the case. I knew Brownell well, and have met his charming wife. This looks badly for some member of the household. I cannot advise you because of my official capacity, but I think you will know what to do."

He bowed and left the house, after having placed the dagger in safe keeping.

"Aldin," exclaimed Earlscourt, when he was again alone with the servants, "come with me."

The valet followed him to an ante-room, and Earlscourt opened the conversation.

"You were with your master, were you not, just before his death?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where?"

"In his room. I assisted him to the library."

"How long before he—was killed?"

"About ten minutes, perhaps a little longer."

"Was any one in the library with him?"

"No, sir—but he was—expecting some one."

"Who?"

"Your wife."

"What!"

Earlscourt staggered, and became ghastly.

"He sent me," said the servant, "to her room, to ask her to come to him."

"And she went?" asked Earlscourt, in a trembling voice.

"I think not, sir. She sent word that she would be down in a few minutes. I did not see her go."

"Did you see any one else enter the room?"

"No, sir."

"Who discovered the murder?"

"Clochette."

"Send her to me."

Aldin turned to obey, but when he reached the door he hesitated and finally came back.

"Well?" asked Earlscourt.

"There is something, sir, which I would like to speak of, and, knowing you to be her friend, perhaps it had better be to you."

"What is it?" said Earlscourt, in a troubled voice.

"Why you see, sir, this morning Mr. Brownell sent me to his wife's room to ask her to come to him. She had gone out and he was in a terrible rage. Then she came in and they had an awful quarrel."

The servant paused.

"Well?" said Earlscourt, knowing he had not yet heard the worst.

"She—she threatened his life," answered the servant, in a low tone.

"Great heavens!" exclaimed Earlscourt. "You heard it?"

"I heard her say, in a voice which shook with anger, 'As there is a God above us, I will kill you!"

From horror Earlscourt was silent.

With dilated eyes and gasping breath he looked for a moment at the servant, then the exigencies of the situation returned to him and brought him self-control.

"You are sure," he asked, slowly, "that you are not mistaken?"

"Perfectly sure!"

"Was there anything else?"

"Nothing!"

"Of course," said Earlscourt, impressively, "Mrs. Brownell is not guilty even of any design to injure her hus-

band, that goes without saying. Her words were uttered in the heat of passion and were meaningless. But they might, in a distrustful mind, create suspicion against her, which would be unpleasant, however innocent she is. Therefore it will be as well for you not to speak of that."

"I certainly shall not, sir. I told you because I thought it best, but I like Mrs. Brownell and would do nothing to injure her."

"That is well. You may go now and send Clochette to me."

"Yes, sir."

Aldin retired, and a moment later the door opened to admit Clochette.

She stood before her mistress' friend and guest with pale, tear-stained face and drooping eyes, her hands clasped tightly before her.

"Clochette," he said kindly, "they tell me that you were the one to give the alarm when you found that your master had been murdered?"

"Yes, sir."

The answer was almost inaudible, but it reached him.

"You went to the library?"

"Yes, sir."

"What for?"

"I was going through into the conservatory."

"For flowers?"

"No, sir."

"Then what? Do not be afraid."

"I saw my mistress go there, and I had a message for her from one of the servants."

"Was she in the conservatory when you went to see her?"

"No, sir."

"Where then?"

"In the library."

Earlscourt paused and shivered.

"What was she doing? Mind, I am not asking from curiosity, but from a desire to shield your mistress from unpleasant comment."

"She was—kneeling beside her husband."

"Did she say anything?"

Clochette burst into tears.

"Oh, Mr. Earlscourt, it was so awful, so horrible! Madame's beautiful hands were all stained with blood, and her dress was saturated with it. She looked like a ghost with her pale face and her purple eyes black as night," she sobbed. "And her voice was frightful as she cried out, 'I am his murderess.'"

Earlscourt sat down in a chair as if he had suddenly lost all control of himself.

There was a web around her from which it seemed impossible to extricate her. The hideousness of her situation struck him with dumb despair.

He bowed his head upon his hands, and for a moment gave way to his terrible fears. Then he raised his head again and tried with a mighty effort to be calm.

"Do any of the other servants know anything of this?" he asked, unsteadily.

"No, sir. They all saw her there and saw her dreadful appearance, but they did not hear her words."

"Can I trust you to keep them to yourself?"

"You may, sir. My mistress has always been good to me, and I will shield her if I can."

"I am glad to see that you appreciate her kindness. That is all?"

"Yes, sir."

"Be sure to say nothing whatever to any of your associates. I may want you at any time. Don't go out, but attend carefully to your mistress' wants. That will do."

Clochette dried her eyes, and returned to her fellow-servants.

Earlscourt paced the floor in greatest excitement.

"What is to be done?" he asked of himself over and over again. "This cannot be concealed at the inquest. Enough of the odious truth will come out to hold her, then those confounded lawyers will find out all. Great God, what can have made her do such a horrible thing? If I only had some one to consult to help me; but Pendennis' mother is dead, and he is the only one whom I would dare to trust. I must go, have the theater closed for to-night, then I think I will see Pendennis anyway."

He took his hat and left the house, telling one of the servants that he was going on business and would return.

He went first to the theater, saw the manager, and told him something of the tragedy, then decided upon seeing Pendennis at once.

"Tell Mr. Pendennis," he said, to the servant who answered his summons, "that I would not disturb him at such a time, were it not of the greatest importance."

He was shown into Philip's private reception-room, and had not long to wait before his friend joined him.

"I don't know how to apologize to you for coming to-day," said Earlscourt, grasping Philip's hand heartily, "but it was a matter of almost necessity. You need not be told of how I sympathize with you in your sorrow."

"It was a terrible blow," answered Philip, sadly.

"And so unexpected," said Earlscourt, dreading to approach the subject uppermost in his mind.

"Yes, very," answered Philip.

Earlscourt paused uneasily.

"I have—come to consult you to-day upon a subject of frightful import. How can I tell you? I could not, did I not know of your deep interest."

"Go on," said Pendennis, earnestly.

"Brownell is dead!"

"Dead!" cried Philip, springing to his feet in horror. "When? How?"

"A few hours ago, and—murdered."

"Good God!" ejaculated Pendennis, his face becoming overcast with a terrible, undefined fear.

"Stabbed through the heart," continued Earlscourt, solemnly.

"By whom?" asked Philip, his voice sinking to a whisper.

The expression upon Earlscourt's face told him all, that his fears were only too true, and he put out his hand to check the utterance of it.

"Don't say it," he gasped, hoarsely. "God of heaven! it is too awful. She must be saved, if it costs my life, poor, unfortunate, suffering girl."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A SILENCE fell upon the two men, which lasted for some time, and it was at last broken by Earlscourt.

"What is done must be done at once," he said, un-

steadily. "The inquest takes place to-morrow, and there is no time to be lost."

"Are the proofs strong?"

"Irrefutable."

Pendennis' face turned even paler than before, and his voice shook with his terrible emotion.

"What are they?"

Earlscourt told him, in as few words as possible, what Aldin and Clochette had overheard.

Prepared as Pendennis was, it was a terrible blow to him.

"I am the blameable one," he cried, in a quivering voice. "Poor, miserable girl, I am the real culprit, for it was I who brought her every wretched thought of wrong which has entered her pure brain."

"What are we to do?" asked Earlscourt, anxious to remove his mind from that subject.

"Let me think. Could we not, by paying Aldin and Clochette a large sum of money, send them from the country?"

"It would condemn her at once. The other servants saw too much."

"Then what is to be done? Great God, I had rather see my poor girl dead than accused of that horrible crime! Can you think of nothing?"

"Yes," said Earlscourt, after some thought, "I see the faint outline of a plan, but I cannot see how it is to be executed."

"What is it?"

"She must leave the country."

"Stella?"

"Yes."

"You are right," cried Pendennis, after a moment's hesitation; "that is best."

"But, how is it to be managed?"

"I will take her."

"You?"

"I."

"But your—mother?"

"My mother, could she speak, would tell me to go. I must save the living, the wronged one. There are others who can look after the dead."

"But you forget how you will compromise her in other ways."

"I will do nothing of the kind. She shall have the protection of my name."

"You mean you will marry her?"

"As soon as that is possible, and in the meantime she shall have the advantage of a chaperon."

"You will marry her with this stain upon her? You will take her to your bosom, with a life between you?"

"I would love her were she a thousand times more guilty than she is, but loving her or not, I would marry her just the same. I am no more guiltless than she, even if I am innocently so."

"You are a noble man, Pendennis," cried Earlscourt, clasping his hand, warmly. "I could wish no better fate for her than a life linked with yours. When will you go? The sooner the better."

"To-night we had better get out of the country. We can leave for Canada, and sail from there, somewhere. You can arrange matters at the theater, and her other business affairs."

"I will attend to all. Will you see her?"

"Yes. I will go with you now."

He touched a bell, and ordered a close carriage. Together they were driven to that awful, crime-stricken home.

"You had better go to her boudoir without announcement," said Earlscourt, as he opened the door with a latch-key. "Let the servants think, if they see you, that you are simply with me."

They mounted the stairs together, and Pendennis crossed the hall and tapped lightly upon the door which Earlscourt indicated to him.

"Come in," answered the sweet voice which he knew so well.

With a rush of feeling, which almost overcame him, he opened the door and stood before her.

She had removed the blood stains from her hands and face, and replaced her dark dress with a wrapper of pure white cashmere, trimmed in bands of short-curled ostrich plumes.

There never was a sweeter, purer picture, even of an angel in heaven, than she presented, as she stood in the

center of the exquisite room, in her flowing draperies, the sun coming through one of the open windows and resting upon her head, in token of the protection of that Master Hand, which rests with such loving kindness upon the widow and orphan.

She started back in surprise as she saw who stood before her.

He extended both his arms in silence. She took a step forward, with a glad, happy smile upon her perfect lips, then stopped short.

"Not yet, Philip," she said, gently. "Let us respect the dead. We have many long years of bliss before us, and can afford to wait yet a little while. You have heard, have you not?"

He looked at her almost in amazement. There was sorrow and regret in her tone, but none of that bitter repentance, that terrible remorse which he had anticipated.

"I have heard!" he answered, solemnly, dropping his arms at his side.

"Oh, Philip, I feel so guilty!"

That was what he had expected, and it was almost a relief to hear it, though the tone was lighter than he would have desired.

He went forward and took her hand gently, then he drew her down beside him upon a small divan.

"You know how sorry I am for you, Stella; you know my love is as immovable as the stars. Now tell me everything, dear."

"There is nothing to tell," she answered wearily, pushing back the bright hair from her forehead. "If it would part us forever, Philip, I would call him back if I could. The first sight of you brought all my guilty love back with a mighty rush; but in my calmer moments, when I know that I caused his death—oh, Philip, it is almost unbearable! What shall I do?"

"Don't grieve so, dear," he said, gently stroking her hair, upon which the golden sun was still shining. "It is done, and cannot be recalled. What we must think of now—and there is not a moment to lose—is how best to avoid the consequences of it."

"Yes," said Stella, in a puzzled way.

"Earlscourt and I have been talking it over,"

"Poor, dear Ted!"

"He is a noble man and a true friend. He and I have decided that it will be better for you to leave to-night."

"I?" she asked, looking at him in surprise.

"I will go with you."

"Where?"

"To Canada."

"What for?"

There was genuine query in her voice, and he was amazed at her want of comprehension.

"You cannot stay here," he answered earnestly.

"Why?"

Her voice was beginning to show some alarm.

"Why, how could you? Do you not know that some of the servants know all about—this?"

"They do?" she asked, turning pale and drawing away from him. "Who told you?"

"Earlscourt."

"He knows, then? Oh, Heaven!"

"Why, child, of course he knows, and Aldin and Clochette also."

"How did they find out? Oh, I am so sorry, so sorry!" she cried, tears coming to her eyes.

"How find out!" he repeated. "They saw you and heard your words."

"Saw me! Heard my words! I don't understand."

He looked at her again in some amazement.

"They entered the library," he explained hesitatingly, "and saw you kneeling over his prostrate form, and heard your words addressed to him."

"Well, what of that?"

"What of it! Why, it told them all."

"All what?"

"Stella, why will you force me to utter those hateful words? It told them all the terrible truth."

"Philip, for Heaven's sake, tell me what you are talking about? How could any word or act of mine tell them the horrible story of this murder?"

"You said, 'I am his murderess,'" he repeated solemnly. "Was it not enough?"

For a single second she stared at him in open-mouthed wonder, then she arose majestically and stood before him,

"Philip Pendennis," she said slowly, "do you believe that *I* committed this murder?"

"What else is there for me to believe?"

"Great God!"

There was stupefied astonishment, horror and despair blended in the tone, and Stella staggered and caught at a chair for support.

"What do you mean?" cried Philip in hope, fear and great anxiety.

"Nothing!" she answered coldly and in her most stately manner. "I have no denial to make. I would scorn to clear myself of such an accusation."

"But your own words, Stella——"

"Were you so eager to believe that you must needs treasure up a servant's words?"

"Oh, dearest!" he cried eagerly, "tell me if you can in truth that you are not guilty! If you knew the tortures I have endured, you would pity me. Speak but the words, I will believe."

"I will not speak them!" she answered haughtily. "I have nothing whatever to say."

"Do not blame me, Stella; pity me. Earlscourt came to me and told me. What was I to believe? There is a terrible network around you, my darling. Unless you can prove your innocence, or will fly with me, you are lost."

Going back over the scene in her mind, Stella remembered all, and she no longer wondered at his doubt or Earlscourt's surmise.

"You know who did this thing?" he asked earnestly.

"Yes, I know."

"Then you can save yourself. Thank Heaven for that."

"I cannot save myself," she answered sadly.

"Cannot! What do you mean?" he asked anxiously.

"That I cannot—will not speak. I am innocent of this fearful charge, but I am bound by an oath which I cannot break."

"But your reputation, perhaps your liberty, depend upon it."

"If my life were at stake my lips should remain dumb. Come what will, I shall not break my word. To you I swear it, as I have already sworn."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"WHAT are you thinking of?" cried Pendennis in consternation.

"My pledged word."

"Do you know that you will ruin yourself?"

"I cannot help it, and even if I do, I carry none with me. I shall be alone in my disgrace."

"Do you willfully forget me? Do I count for nothing?"

"I do not forget you, but my ignominy cannot reflect upon you."

"It will when you are my wife. If you had been guilty of this crime I would have taken you to my bosom and shielded you from the scorn of the world. I would have tried, with the greatness of my love, to make you forget your isolation and your remorse. But, innocent, I forbid you to bear the burden of another's guilt. It is a quixotic notion of honor which you have taken into your head, but it is a most erring one. I command you to speak!"

He spoke firmly, but with loving kindness, and there was no resentment in her tone as she answered:

"I will not!"

"But you promised to be my wife."

"I have not declined to keep my word."

"Can you do it, think you, with this charge against you?"

"Even to be your wife, which is the only happiness earth holds for me, I would not betray the person who committed that crime."

"Then you will have to leave the country with me tonight, and remain away until your fame is cleared," said Pendennis, after a moment of deep thought.

"That I will not do either," answered Stella, firmly. "I will not weigh you down with an incumbrance of that kind. I shall remain here. I shall continue my work the same as I have done, and if I am arrested I shall stand my trial. Justice is in the hands of God! I have committed sin enough of my own without being punished for that of another. Do not try to alter my determination, Philip, for I should resist forever."

Admiration of the noble nature of the woman who could so sacrifice herself had crept slowly into Philip's fine eyes, and as she ceased speaking he clasped her closely in his arm and drew her to his breast.

"You are misguided, but none the less a treasure," he said, tenderly. "I thank Heaven for your noble generosity. I must think of some other means of saving you."

"Do not try to find the real culprit, Philip, I beseech you. Shield me if you can, keep them from suspecting me of so horrible a crime, but protect the malefactor, for my sake."

"Is it some one you love, then?"

"Yes, very dearly. You would also, if you only knew."

"You puzzle me more than I can say. You will not trust me?"

"I cannot."

Philip sighed and kissed her gently.

"I must go now. Go to think of some way to save you from yourself. Good-bye."

He kissed her again with warmth and tenderness, and left her.

"She is innocent," he said, half an hour later, to Earlscourt. "Do not shake your head in disbelief. You could never look into her clear eyes and doubt. If ever blamelessness and childlike truth was stamped upon a countenance it is hers. It is a most extraordinary case."

"What are we to do?"

"I cannot tell; wait until we know the developments at the inquest, I presume."

"But suppose they find sufficient cause to hold her?"

Philip gnawed the end of his mustache for a moment in silence.

"It is all that we can do," he said, at last. "She will consent to nothing. She thinks that because she knows she is innocent every one else must believe it."

* * * * * * *

The inquest was over, in part, and to be continued the day following.

Aldin and Clochette had been guarded in their answers to the questions put to them; they had carefully avoided all mention of those condemning words which their mistress had spoken, and yet that horrible death's-

head, suspicion, was leveled at her, and people who looked eagerly at her because of her beauty, shuddered slightly and whispered:

"She is an actress. What better could be expected of her?"

It was only a whisper as yet, but threatening momentarily to grow into a mutter, if not a decided sound.

The whole city was in wildest excitement and the streets were thronged with the vast crowd assembled in front of the scene of the tragedy.

Those admitted to the inquest had departed, and the gloaming was settling in the mansion stricken with death in its most hideous form.

"Do they expect me at the theater to-night, Ted?" asked Stella, as she stood beside him for a momont in the hall.

"No; it is closed for the remainder of the week."

"I am glad."

"Will you wish to continue on after that, if—if all goes well?"

"Decidedly."

"Stella, listen to me, dear. You know I would say nothing which was not for your good. Let Pendennis take you away for awhile."

"And so stamp myself with a crime which I never committed. It is no use, Ted, I will not do it!"

She spoke so firmly that he saw it was useless to urge her further, and, wisely, remained silent.

"Was Philip's mother buried to-day?" she asked, sadly.

"Yes."

"Poor fellow. It has been a terrible day for him."

"You are sorry for his suffering?"

"You know it."

"Then why not lighten it, when you might so easily? Oh, Stella, go, for his sake!"

She shook her head, and smiled bitterly as she mounted the broad stairs.

"You and Navie will stand by me, will you not?" she asked, wistfully, as she left him at the door of his own room. "I should like to know that you, Ted, my dear, old friend, do not believe me guilty. I have grown to be a coward since yesterday, and it would be a great

comfort to me to know that you trust me and believe that I did not do this horrible thing."

"I would stand by you forever, even if I knew you to be guilty," he exclaimed, passionately. "You are one of the noblest women God ever created, and I have no feeling but love for you. Oh, Stella, why will you not let us save you?"

"Do not speak of it again; you pain me," she said, simply, pressing his hand gently. "Perhaps I ought to go, but I cannot stamp my life with that awful sin."

She left him without another word, and he pushed open his door, which stood ajar, and entered his own room.

In the center of the room, underneath the lighted chandelier, his wife stood.

She was bending forward in an eager, listening attitude, her hands locked before her, her face deadly pale, her whole appearance indicating a terror beyond words.

"What was it she said?" she asked, in a strange, sibilant voice. "Tell me."

He looked at her in surprise, marvelling much at her extraordinary manner.

"Pendennis and I have been endeavoring to persuade her to leave the city."

"What for?"

"There are reasons why we believe it would be best for her," answered Earlscourt, evasively.

"What reasons?"

"It is better that you should not know, my darling."

"But I must know!" she returned, in scarcely repressible excitement.

"There are some persons," he answered, hesitatingly, "who are unjust enough to connect her with the murder. It is frightful."

"Stella?"

The word was a question, which ended in a gasp.

"Yes."

"They believe she did—that dreadful thing?"

"That is it."

For a moment she was silent, silent from the excess of her shocking emotion.

At last she spoke, in a voice so hoarse, so anguished, that it was scarcely recognizable.

"It is false!" she exclaimed, with a force, of which he would have believed her incapable. "You do not believe it, Ted; oh, for God's sake, say you do not!"

"It looks badly for her," he answered, in an evasive manner.

"And she knows all?"

"She knows."

"She will not go away as you request?"

"No."

"Can she clear herself?"

"She will not."

"What will be the result if she does not?"

"Ruin; perhaps death."

Navie drew back, a convulsive shudder shaking her from head to foot.

"That must not be!" she cried, aloud, falling on her knees beside her husband, her eyes wide with horrible fear. "Oh, Ted, save her!"

"What can I do?"

"Hesitate at nothing!" she gasped, wildly. "Even to have the taint rest upon her for a day, would kill me. Promise me, Ted, promise!"

"I promise to do the best I can, but I am afraid it will be little enough."

"But you *must* succeed," she panted. "Listen, Ted; you love me, do you not?"

"Better than my life."

"Then, save her! Let nothing stand in the way of that, and give her back her reputation, as unstained as before this—direful thing occurred. I ask this, as you value my life."

"You are overwrought, my dearest," said Earlscourt, soothingly, clasping her closely in his arms. "You must calm yourself. Your love for her has made you oversensitive. What can be done, shall be. At the last moment all may be made clear, for she may be as innocent as you are."

She hid her white, despairing face in his bosom and sobbed aloud.

"Don't say that," she said, in a shivering, tremulous voice. "It is the very essence of mockery. Dear God, how much more shall I be called upon to suffer?"

"You are foolish, child. This will end well. Don't

worry your pretty head so, darling. You must be calm, for it is time I was at the theater, and I cannot leave you like this," he said gently.

"There, I am all right now," she exclaimed, forcing a smile to her drawn, haggard face. "Don't let me detain you. You will be late. I had forgotten."

He kissed her many times and went from her.

And she fell where he had left her, groveling and beating her hands together in her awful agony.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"Now, what shall I do?" Navie cried aloud. "There is no escape for me, no outlet. I am hemmed in on all sides, and the punishment of my sins draws tighter about me. I am doomed—doomed to suffer, doomed to receive the wages of sin, which is death! Is there no move which I can make before I give up all hope? She must not, shall not suffer for a fault of mine. What shall I do?"

She remained for some time in thought, rambling in a dazed, uncertain way from subject to subject, then at last she staggered to her feet.

There was no fixed determination in her mind as she groped her way blindly about the room and clothed herself for the street.

Naturally of a virtuous and benevolent disposition, Navie totally lacked that firmness of mind which is necessary to the perfect equipoise of every character. She was, in consequence, utterly unable to resist the force of imperious circumstances, and was led on gradually and involuntarily from one crime to another, until she was involved in guilt beyond the possibility of escaping.

She made her way out into the street, from which the dense crowd had cleared, leaving it lonely and deserted. The night was dark, and the street lamps shed their beacon rays abroad, safely directing the storm-tossed mariner upon the uncertain and shoaly sea of a great city. But the darkness in her soul blinded her eyes, and she felt her way along, staggering now and then under the great weight of her mental woe.

Her soul cried out in its mortal anguish, even when her lips were dumb; she repressed the sound of her

deadly pain until her bosom seemed bursting with overcharged misery.

She walked on until she came to an imposing building, which was only outlined by the street lights, as not one gleamed within its walls.

Taking no notice of that, she mounted the stoop of a brown-stone house and pulled the bell.

It clanged out with a peculiar mournful sound which seemed to form an appropriate accompaniment to the dirge within her heart, whose only words were "desolation and death."

A servant lighted the hall gas and answered her summons.

"May I see Mr. Daniel Pendennis," she asked in a voice which startled even herself.

The servant hesitated.

"My master has sustained a great loss," he said respectfully, "and has retired to his own room. He does not wish to be disturbed."

"Go to him and insist upon his seeing me," she returned, still unable to control her voice. "Tell him that it is of vital importance."

Impressed more by her tone and suffering face than her words, the servant showed her to a small parlor and went to do her bidding.

She sat down upon a chair and, lost in bitter reflections, she waited; how long, she never knew.

She was aroused by the sound of a voice, and looking up she saw an elegant gentleman with a kind old face, framed with snowy hair.

"You wished to see me, madam?"

"Yes."

A rush of emotion stopped her utterance, and she stood before him trembling and silent.

"Will you not be seated?" he asked gently, to cover her embarrassment.

"In a moment," she answered in a hollow voice. "Did you ever see me before, sir?"

"Not to my knowledge," looking at her critically.

"I am the unfortunate daughter of Madelon Marblehead."

She paused, for Mr. Pendennis had turned deadly pale.

"You are not—Navie?" he asked, with tremulous hesitation.

"I am."

He turned even paler, and put out his hand in an uncertain sort of way.

"Has your mother told you?" he began.

"My mother is dead, but before she died she told me the story of my birth."

"Then you know that—I am your father."

"I know it."

"There is one thing which she very likely did not tell you, and that is that I never saw you from the time you were a small child. She concealed you from me because I would not consent to some terms she proposed, and I was never able to find you. Will you let me make reparation to you now, my daughter?"

He extended his hands in a pleading way, and she allowed him to take her own and kiss her cold brow, but there was no enthusiastic demonstration of affection upon either side.

"It is too late for reparation now," she said slowly. "I don't know why I have come to you to-day; possibly because you are the only relative I have, and I need condolence and advice. I am in great trouble, from which there is no power which can extricate me."

"Sit down and tell me all about it," he said gently, recovering his composure, and leading her to a sofa.

"I shall have to begin at the beginning," she returned after a long pause, "and endeavor to make you understand, if I can, the perverted education which I have received, and my miserable training in the ways of vice instead of virtue."

She told her story simply and in a straightforward manner, screening herself no more than justice and truth demanded.

Daniel Pendennis covered his eyes with his hands and groaned aloud. He interrupted her many times with ejaculations of disgust and amazement.

She told of her love for Earlscourt, the one pure passion of her unholy life, and great drops of icy perspiration stood round her brow and mouth as she reached the concluding words of the dreadful tale.

"Without any desire or intention of taking Raoul

Brownell's life, I struck the blow which made me a murderess!"

"My God!"

The cry was an exclamation of mental pain which told much of the suffering of the listener.

Without pausing, save to wipe the heavy moisture from her face, Navie continued, telling him of the frightful suspicion which hung about her friend.

"I cannot bear it," she concluded. "I will not have my one friend accused of my crime. Tell me, if you can, what shall I do?"

Daniel Pendennis had listened to the story of Stella's self-sacrifice in silent wonderment.

He still held to that old-fashioned notion concerning actresses, and the query suggested itself something after the same order as that which perplexed the mind of the people eighteen hundred years ago, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"

But he drove the thought from his mind, and, bowing his head upon his hands, seemed to reflect deeply.

"She—Mrs. Brownell—refuses to leave town, you say?" he asked, at last.

"Yes."

"Then you must be the one to do so."

"And leave the suspicion upon her? Never!"

"But your flight would attract it to you."

"I will not risk it. People might think I had disappeared in order to avoid testifying against her."

"You could leave a confession."

"I might do that."

"Will you do it?"

"I would be compelled to tell all?"

"Not necessarily. A simple confession of the—the act would be sufficient."

"When would I have to go?"

"The sooner the better. To-night, now!"

"And never see his face again? I could not! I cannot!" she returned, hoarsely. "I had rather die!"

"What will you do, then?"

"Is her danger immediate?" she asked, with some glimmer of hope.

"No."

"What positive evidence could there be to convict her?"

"I do not know. There may be condemning circumstances. I know nothing of the testimony."

"The inquest will be continued to-morrow. Might she not be cleared of all suspicion?"

"It is possible."

"Even if it should not be so, would I not have time after that to—for the—other?"

"Ye—es!"

"Then I will wait! Oh, God, if I could only be released from this horrible position."

"You may count upon me to do everything which lies in my power. You will not hesitate to call upon me?"

"No; you are the only one who can help me, the only one to whom I can apply. Good-bye, I am going now."

She arose, unsteadily, as she spoke, and the father's heart, warming to the child who had never known a parent's tenderness, was further touched.

He clasped her in his arms and wept.

"Poor, misguided child!" he said, brokenly. "If I had done my duty this might never have happened. If I had tried a little harder to find you, I might have succeeded, and saved you all this misery and remorse."

"I only am to blame," she interrupted, wearily. "I have sinned beyond pardon."

"Do not say so!" said the old man, gently. "Do you forget that it was the repentant sinner's tear which bought the Peri's way into Paradise? Do you not remember the bright, meteoric smile which the angel threw from heaven's gate to hail that tear, 'the gift that is most dear to Heaven.' Hope yet, dear child. The tooba-tree extends its inviting shade to all, the saints and repentant sinners alike."

A choking sob was his only answer.

She opened the door and passed out.

He followed her to the stoop, stood bare-headed upon it until she, with slow, halting steps, vanished from his sight, then he returned to his own room.

He looked about him with a wan, ghastly smile.

"Peace and plenty here," he said aloud; "sorrow, crime, and death there, and yet I am her father! It is the way of the world. Children suffer for the sins of the

parent, and she is suffering for both of ours. My misery has just begun! In the last years of my life, in my old age, sorrow and remorse have come upon me. It is the payment of an old debt with its interest compounded, it is just, it is right! And she—poor little girl! A bright, young life ruined! She is an outcast and murderess, her hands are stained with blood, and yet her soul is as pure as the dead."

He bowed his head and wept again.

He was right.

"——For a spirit pure as hers
Is always pure, ev'n while it errs;
As sunshine, broken in the rill,
Though turned astray, is sunshine still."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

The inquest in the case of Raoul Brownell was nearly at a close. All the witnesses but one had been examined, and no new evidence elicited which threw any light whatever upon the culprit.

With pale, strained face, and contrary to the desire of her husband, Navie had remained where she could hear every word. Hope had begun to revive once more, and she began to think again that some way would be opened for her escape.

"Only one more witness, the footman," she whispered to herself, "then this horrible suspense will be at an end."

She pressed her hand tightly over her heart and waited breathlessly as his name was called.

"John Thornton."

The man came forward, and took the chair the other witnesses had occupied.

"What position do you hold in this house?"

"Footman."

"Had you any opportunities of knowing anything of Mr. Brownell's life?"

"Yes, sir."

"What?"

"I sometimes attended the door."

"Were you on duty the day of the murder?"

"Yes, sir."

"Were you in the room with the other servants when they first saw the body?"

"No, sir."

"Then you know nothing of the murder?"

The man shifted uneasily in his chair.

"Do you?" the coroner repeated.

"I—I was looking through the library window when Clochette entered. I sometimes entered the house that way when no one saw me."

"What did you see when you looked through the window?"

Again the man was silent.

"Answer!" said the coroner, sternly.

"I saw Mr. Brownell upon the floor, and his wife kneeling over him, her hands all covered with blood."

"Was that all?"

The man's face had slowly grown ashy. His voice was scarcely audible as he answered:

"She spoke some words."

"What were they?"

"I did not hear the first."

"Repeat as much as you did hear."

"'Am his murderess.'"

Every ear in the room was bent eagerly forward to catch the words, and there was a decided sensation. A low murmur of horror, a chill of disgust, passed through the room, and even men turned aside their heads in sickening repugnance.

"You say Clochette Le Stald was in the room at the time?"

"She stood just inside the door."

A few more unimportant questions were asked, then he was dismissed and Clochette recalled.

Trembling and tearful she returned to the improvised witness-box.

"In giving your testimony in this case you did not speak of hearing your mistress utter any words."

"No, sir."

"Why not?"

Clochette was silent, and covered her face with her hands.

"Do you not know," said the solemn voice of the cor-

oner, inexorable when duty demanded it, "that you are bound by a moral and legal obligation to be the assistant of justice? Further than that, do you not know that later on, in a court, before whose tribunal criminals are tried, you can be forced to speak?"

Clochette's sobs were his only answer.

"Why do you not speak?"

"I will speak, sir, but I cannot bear to repeat any of my mistress' words which were never intended for other ears."

"Did you hear the words which John Thornton says he heard?"

"Yes, sir."

"Will you repeat them?"

"I heard my mistress say 'I am his murderess!'"

That was all.

She was permitted to retire.

Blindly and with extended, groping hands, Navie went from her place of concealment. She found her way into the room where Stella, Philip, and Earlscourt were seated.

She opened the door and stood before them.

Her lips were deadly white, her eyes glassy, her face covered with a cold, clammy dew, which rendered her horrible to look upon.

"What is it?" cried Earlscourt, springing to her side and putting out his arms to support her.

"Nothing!' she answered, forcing a smile to her pallid lips. "Go find out the result of this—investigation."

She spoke with such dignity, such firmness, such pathos, that unquestioningly Earlscourt departed to do her bidding.

He had heard most of the evidence and knew almost all before he departed.

It was not long ere he returned, returned bearing the news which all had expected, but none had dared put into words.

"What is it?" asked Philip, as he caught sight of his friend's troubled face.

"She is to be held to await the action of the grand jury," returned Earlscourt, in a low tone.

The words had scarcely been uttered, when a man, a stranger to them, stood upon the threshold.

He stepped into the room, but, divining his intention, Navie threw herself between him and Stella.

"Do not touch her!" she cried, in a loud, despairing voice. "She is innocent, for I am the murderess!"

The man fell back in utter bewilderment, while Earlscourt, stunned, petrified, stood with open mouth, and indrawn, gasping breath, scarce comprehending all the misery which had befallen him.

She turned to him.

Her hopeless eyes, her shrinking attitude, appealed with a mighty force to his heart, and he took one step forward, only to fall back again.

"You!" he gasped.

"I confess my crime!" she exclaimed, in a hollow voice. "Oh, Ted, Ted!"

"You are mad!" he cried out, seeming to see some reason for her words, and grasping it.

"Would to God I were!" she answered. "It might lessen the sin. It might lessen the awful pain here!"—pressing her hand on her heart.

She paused, and over her stony face there flashed one gleam of suffering, then as quickly vanished, leaving her countenance as though carved from marble.

"You have all heard," she cried, aloud, again. "I struck the fatal blow, it was my hand which slew him, and now 'twill slay myself!"

Before they could reach her, she had drawn a shining steel blade from the folds of her dress, and plunged it into her bosom.

With a fearful gurgle, she sunk upon the floor, and for a moment lay there as though unconscious.

With blanched faces, and ghastly, staring eyes, the witnesses of the wretched scene stood breathless, dazed, stupidly gazing upon the fallen woman.

She raised her head, and endeavored to stagger to her feet, but it was too late, as already her life-blood was staining her dress.

With painful effort she dragged herself across the floor until she lay at his feet, then she raised her eyes with the pitiful expression of a wounded animal, and said:

"Ted, Ted, have you no word of good-bye for me?

Let me hear the sound of your voice once more, if I hear it in a curse."

Those words seemed to arouse him from his lethargy, and he bent forward and raised her in his arms.

"Oh, my darling, why have you done this awful thing? A doctor, quick, quick!"

She put up her hand feebly with a detaining gesture.

"It is too late!" she gasped. "I have done my work well. It is my life's blood which you see."

But Philip summoned a servant and sent in haste for a physician.

"Tell me what tempted you to do this deed, my own?" asked Earlscourt, as he looked upon her in dry-eyed grief.

"It is better that you should not know," she answered slowly, painfully. "The secret will die with him and me."

"Do you not trust me?"

"Oh, Ted, if I only had done so in time! What torture I might have saved us all. You would have despised me, but I would not have added this crowning dishonor to your life."

"Tell me all, Navie, all that you can, sweetheart."

An expression of deep anguish crossed her face. She closed her eyes for a moment, and when she opened them there was a perceptible change. The shadow of death lurked in their depths.

He saw it and shuddered.

"It is the old story," she said, pausing between each word for breath; "the old story of sin and its hideous shadows. The sin which lays its victims low to be trampled in the filth and mire of the street; the sin which sets itself in the market place to be scoffed at, jeered at and spit upon by the assembled crowd; the sin which sells a soul and bids adieu to the good-will of man and the smile of God. It is all over now, all the fear and shame and horror of it all. Good-bye, my dearest, the one pure lily that reared its head in the midst of all the corruption. Farewell—I—Stella—Philip—'repentant sinner's tears'——"

She raised her head, smiled and fell back.

For one moment Earlscourt bent above her, whispering into her ear, and it seemed to reach her even down into

the valley where she was rapidly journeying, for she raised her eyes once more, her lips framed some word intelligible only to him, and the presence of the frail spirit was demanded by the Master.

They took her from his arms and bore her gently to a couch, and he—kneeling where they had left him—sunk forward upon the floor, his white, unconscious face downward.

Poor Navie!

"No mercy now can clear her brow
For this world's peace to pray;
For, as love's wild prayer dissolved in air,
Her woman's heart gave way!
But the sin forgiven by Christ in heaven,
By man is cursed alway!"

CHAPTER XL.

THREE years bring their changes to the grief-stricken, as well as the happy. Sorrows are put aside if not forgotten, and though the cicatrice may remain, yet the wound no longer gapes in its agonizing pain.

Back to the old playhouse once more, where she had known so much woe and so much pleasure; back again to the old mimic existence which had lightened her somber life, let us go again with Stella, now that the green curtain has been dropped upon all her unhappiness.

There she stands, as in the olden time, before her mirror, as glorious a vision as ever gladdened the eyes of man, in her soft, fleecy draperies, with her lovely neck and arms bare and gleaming like delicately tinted marble. Her small, well-poised head is tipped to one side as she adds a trifle of pomade to her long eyelash upon one side, then turned the other way as the hare's-foot is brought into service to add a touch of *rouge* to the upper part of one dainty ear, then she stands quite still to criticise the result.

"There, Miss Vanity," says a laughing voice at her side, "have you admired yourself enough for once?"

"Why, are you growing anxious to kiss me?" she asks saucily, as she puts up her two dainty lips.

"I am not fond of having my lips daubed up with

grease, paint or Exora *rouge*, if I must get the name exactly correct," he answers laughingly.

"I have not a particle on. Kiss me, for oh, Phil, I am so happy that I feel as if my heart were bursting right out of my body."

He does kiss her long and tenderly, interrupted by a knock upon the door.

"Stell, are you dressed? May I come in?" asks an eager, hearty voice.

"Certainly," answers Stella's husband for her. "Come in, Ted."

"You ought to see the house," he says, almost before the door is opened.

"What's the matter?" asks Stella, with mock solemnity. "Yellow dog?"

"Yellow dog, indeed!" he returns in disgust. "Why, it is the most beautiful thing you ever saw. Looks like heaven had opened and all the angels had come through."

"What, the house?"

"Well, the people. They mean to give you a grand welcome after your English triumphs."

"And I mean to give them a grand performance, to show them that Victoria's subjects have not turned my head nor my heart from my own loved country. The dukes and marchionesses and princes and ladies are all very nice and pleasant, but give me my good old plain Mr. and Mrs., and my dear, dear old plebeian America, in preference to all other climes and lands. Oh, Ted, oh, Phil, I am so glad to be home again!"

She caught Philip round the neck, and went whirling around the small room to the tones of an imaginary waltz.

"Here, madcap, I cry you mercy," Phil gasps at last, all out of breath from his rapid gyration. "You'll have every particle of make-up off your face."

"What of that?" she asks, with a charming *moue*. "You always say I look prettier without it."

"So you do, but not with it half on and half off, and the *rouge* streaked across your face as if dirty water had trickled down it."

"Say, Stel," cries Earlscourt, "if you'll only stop long enough, I've come here to tell you something."

"What?" she asks, with a penny-tragedy air.

"Well, get that genzeifeuzoid off your nose and I'll tell you."

She pauses before the glass, carefully wipes off a smudge of pomade, powders over the spot, and turns to him again.

"Speak!" she says in a sepulchral voice.

"They are going to call upon you for a speech to-night. It is to be an awful surprise to you, you know."

"Great Scot!" Here, Phil, take a pencil and paper and write me out something, quick. Make it sound a little rattled, as though I were making it up as I go along, and say what a tremendous surprise it is to have that sprung on me all in a moment, only leave out the slang, please. Make it nice, so that they will not think the ocean turned my brain over with all the rest. But you know what to say."

"Overture!"

"Heavens! I'll strangle that call-boy. Hurry, Phil! You haven't got steen seconds, and I'll never learn it. When will they call for it, Ted?"

"Not before the end of the act, on your recall, I guess."

"Oh, then there'll be loads of time. Do your level best, Phil, and make them think I am A. F. G., a *ne plus ultra* of impromptu speakers."

[THE END.]

WHAT IS SAPOLIO?

It is a solid, handsome cake of scouring soap, which has no equal for all cleaning purposes except the laundry. To use it is to value it.

What will Sapolio do? Why, it will clean paint, make oil-cloths bright, and give the floors, tables, and shelves a new appearance.

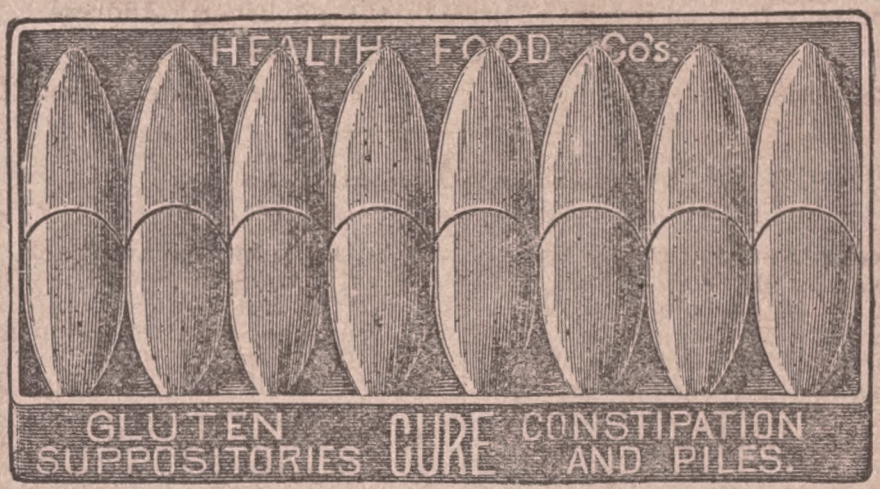
It will take the grease off the dishes and off the pots and pans.

You can scour the knives and forks with it, and make the tin things shine brightly. The wash-basin, the bath-tub, even the greasy kitchen sink, will be as clean as a new pin if you use **SAPOLIO.** One cake will prove all we say Be a clever little housekeeper and try it.

BEWARE OF IMITATIONS.

ABANDON PHYSIC!

50 Cents by Mail. Sold by Druggists.



All Our Health Food Circulars Free.

DR. A. W. THOMPSON, Northampton, Mass., says: "I have tested the Gluten Suppositories, and consider them valuable, as indeed I expected from the excellence of their theory."

DR. WM. TODD HELMUTH declares the Gluten Suppositories to be "the best remedy for constipation which I have ever prescribed."

As Sancho Panza said of sleep, so say I of your Gluten Suppositories: "God bless the man who invented them!"—E. L. RIPLEY, Burlington, Vt.

"I prescribe the Gluten Suppositories almost daily in my practice, and am often astonished at the permanent results obtained."—J. MONTFORT SCHLEY, M. D., Professor Physical Diagnosis Woman's Medical College, New York City,

HEALTH FOOD CO., 76 4th Avenue, N. Y.

Neuralgine, the Great Pain Cure.

One application of NEURALGINE removes in many cases the most excruciating pain—the worst cases rarely needing more than two or three.

SUFFERERS should at once send for this invaluable **REMEDY.**

Price 50 cts. per Bottle.

For sale by all Druggists, or will be sent by mail to any address, postage paid.

Neuralgine Company,

26 Vandewater Street, New York.

MUNRO'S LIBRARY---POCKET EDITION.

Persons who wish to purchase the following works in complete and unabridged form are cautioned to order and see that they get MUNRO'S LIBRARY, Pocket Edition, as works published in other Libraries are frequently abridged and incomplete. Every number of MUNRO'S LIBRARY is unchanged and unabridged.

Newsdealers wishing Catalogues of MUNRO'S LIBRARY, Pocket Edition, bearing their imprint, will be supplied on sending their names, addresses, and number required.

The works in MUNRO'S LIBRARY, Pocket Edition, are printed from larger type and on better paper than any other series published.

The following works are for sale by all newsdealers, or will be sent to any address, postage free, on receipt of price by the publisher. Address

MUNRO'S PUBLISHING HOUSE,

P. O. Box 3643. 24 and 26 Vandewater Street, N. Y.

NUMERICAL LIST.

NO.		PRICE.
1	A Dreadful Temptation, by Mrs. Alexander McVeigh Miller	20
2	The Bride of the Tomb, by Mrs. Alexander McVeigh Miller	20
3	An Old Man's Darling, by Mrs. Alexander McVeigh Miller	20
4	Queenie's Terrible Secret, by Mrs. Alexander McVeigh Miller	20
5	Jaquelina, by Mrs. Alexander McVeigh Miller	20
6	Little Golden's Daughter, by Mrs. Alexander McVeigh Miller	20
7	The Rose and the Lily, by Mrs. Alexander McVeigh Miller	20
8	Countess Vera, by Mrs. Alexander McVeigh Miller	20
9	Bonnie Dora, by Mrs. Alexander McVeigh Miller	20
10	Guy Kenmore's Wife, by Mrs. Alexander McVeigh Miller	20
11	Janet's Repentance, by George Eliot	10
12	Silas Marner, by George Eliot	10
13	Felix Holt, the Radical, by George Eliot	20
14	The Mill on the Floss, by George Eliot	20
15	Brother Jacob, by George Eliot	10
16	Adam Bede, by George Eliot	20
17	Romola, by George Eliot	20
18	Sad Fortunes of Rev. Amos Barton, by George Eliot	10
19	Daniel Deronda, by George Eliot	20
20	Middlemarch, by George Eliot	20
21	Mr. Gilfil's Love Story, by George Eliot	10
22	The Spanish Gypsy, by George Eliot	20
23	Impressions of Theophrastus Such, by George Eliot	10
24	The Two Orphans, by D'Ennery	20
25	Yolande, by William Black	20
26	Lady Audley's Secret, by Miss M. E. Braddon	20
27	When the Ship Comes Home, by Besant and Rice	10
28	John Halifax, Gentleman, by Miss Mulock	20
29	In Peril of His Life, by Emile Gaboriau	20
30	The Romantic Adventures of a Milkmaid	10
31	Molly Bawn, by the "Duchess"	20
32	Portia, by the "Duchess"	20
33	Kit: a Memory, by James Payn	20
34	East Lynne, by Mrs. Henry Wood	20
35	Her Mother's Sin, by Charlotte M. Braeme	10
36	A Princess of Thule, by William Black	20
37	Phyllis, by the "Duchess"	20
38	David Copperfield, by Charles Dickens	20
39	Very Hard Cash, by Charles Reade	20
40	Ivanhoe, by Sir Walter Scott	20
41	Shirley, by Miss Bronte	20
42	The Last Days of Pompeii, by Sir Bulwer Lytton	20
43	Charlotte Temple, by Mrs. Rowson	10
44	Dora Thorne, by Charlotte M. Braeme	20
45	Old Curiosity Shop, by Charles Dickens	20
46	Camille, by Alexandre Dumas, Jr	20
47	The Three Guardsmen, by Alexandre Dumas	20
48	Jane Eyre, by Charlotte Bronte	20
49	Romance of a Poor Young Man, by Octave Feuillet	20
50	Back to the Old Home, by Mary Cecil Hay	

MUNRO'S LIBRARY.—Pocket Edition.

NO.		PRICE.
51	Maggie; or, the Loom Girl of Lowell	20
52	Two Wedding Rings, by Margaret Blount	20
53	Led Astray, by Helen M. Lewis.	20
54	A Woman's Atonement, by Adah M. Howard	20
55	False, by Geraldine Fleming	20
56	The Curse of Dangerfield, by Elsie Snow	20
57	Ten Years of His Life, by Eva Evergreen	20
58	A woman's Fault, by Evelyn Gray	20
59	Twenty years After, by Alexandre Dumas	20
60	A Queen Amongst Women, and Between Two Sins	20
61	Madolin's Lover, by Charlotte M. Braeme	20
62	Thaddeus of Warsaw, by Jane Porter	20
63	Lucile, by Owen Meredith	20
64	Charles Auchester, by E. Berger	20
65	A Strange Story, by Sir Bulwer Lytton	20
66	Aurora Floyd, by Miss Braddon	20
67	Barbara's History, by Amelia B. Edwards	20
68	Called to Account, by Annie Thomas	20
69	Old Myddelton's Money, by Mary Cecil Hay	20
70	Thorns and Orange Blossoms, by Charlotte M. Braeme	20
71	Nicholas Nickleby, by Charles Dickens	20
72	Moths, a Novel, by "Ouida"	20
73	Gertrude, the Governess, by W. M. Turner, M. D.	20
74	Christmas Stories, by Charles Dickens	20
75	The Executor, by Mrs. Alexander	20
76	Annette, by Alexandre Dumas, Jr.	20
77	A Sinless Crime, by Geraldine Fleming	20
78	A Double Marriage, by Beatrice Collensie	20
79	The Wentworth Mystery, by Watts Phillips	20
80	Leola Dale's Fortune, by Geraldine Fleming	20
81	Plot and Counterplot, by the Author of "Quadroona"	20
82	Fair and False, by Mrs. Dale	20
83	Irene Gray's Legacy, by Adah M. Howard	20
84	Set in Diamonds, by the "Countess"	20
85	Who was the Heir? by Geraldine Fleming	20
86	Little Golden	20
87	Daughters of Eve, by Paul Meritt	20
88	The World Between Them, by the "Countess"	20
89	Beauty's Marriage, by Owen Marston	20
90	Sundered Hearts, by Adah M. Howard	20
91	A Fatal Wooing, by Laura J. Libbey	20
92	Only a Girl's Love, by Geraldine Fleming	20
93	Not to be Won, by Mrs. Lenox Bell	20
94	Merit Versus Money, by Garnett Marnell	20
95	Agatha, by Eva Evergreen	20
96	Behind the Silver Veil, by Mrs. Dale	20
97	A Passion Flower, by the "Countess"	20
98	Pauline by the Author of "Leonnette's Secret"	20
99	Wife or Slave, by Mrs. Lenox Bell	20
100	A Dark Marriage Morn, by Owen Marston	20
101	Dregs and Froth, by A. H. Wall	20
102	For Better For Worse, by Mostyn Durward	20
103	What Love Will Do, by Annabel Gray	10
104	Lover and Husband, by Owen Marston	20
105	As Fate Would Have It, by Evelyn Gray	20
106	The Woman in Red, by G. W. M. Reynolds	20
107	Doubly Wronged, by Adah M. Howard	20
108	The Eyrie, and The Mystery of a Young Girl	20
109	Gabrielle, by Louise McCarthy.	20
110	Sweet as a Rose, by Mostyn Durward	20
111	The Shadow of a Sin, by Charlotte M. Stanley	20
112	A Waif of the Sea, by Charlotte M. Stanley	20
113	The Huntsford Fortune, by Charlotte M. Stanley	20
114	The Secret of a Birth, by Charlotte M. Stanley	20
115	Jessie Deane, by Charlotte M. Stanley	20
116	A Golden Mask, by Charlotte M. Stanley	20
117	Accord and Discord, by Charlotte M. Stanley	20
118	A Death-bed Marriage, by Charlotte M. Stanley	20
119	Hearts and Gold, by Charlotte M. Stanley	20
120	Romance of a Black Veil, by Charlotte M. Braeme	20

MUNRO'S LIBRARY.—Pocket Edition.

NO.		PRICE.
121	At the World's Mercy, by F. Warden	10
122	Circumstantial Evidence	10
123	Countess Isabel, by Geraldine Fleming	10
124	Marjorie's Child	20
125	A Coachman's Love, by Herbert Bernard	20
126	A Dangerous Game, by Ida Linn Girard	10
127	His Wedded Wife	20
128	Uncle Ned's Cabin, by Adah M. Howard	20
129	Count of Monte-Cristo, Part I. by Alexandre Dumas	20
130	Count of Monte-Cristo, Part II., by Alexandre Dumas	20
131	A Blighted Home, by Adah M. Howard	10
132	The Child Wife, by Adah M. Howard	10
133	The Beautiful Rivals	10
134	For a Dream's Sake, by Mrs. Herbert Martin	20
135	Mark Seaworth, by William H. G. Kingston	20
136	Regimental Legends, by J. S. Winter	20
137	The Heidenmauer, by J. Fenimore Cooper	20
138	Susan Drummond, by Mrs. J. H. Riddell	20
139	Robbing Peter to Pay Paul, by J. Saunders	20
140	Charles O'Malley, Part I., by Charles Lever	20
141	Charles O'Malley, Part II., by Charles Lever	20
142	The Flirt, by Mrs. Grey	20
143	The Minister's Wife, by Mrs. Oliphant	20
144	A Terrible Temptation, by Chas. Reade	20
145	The New Abelard, by Robert Buchanan	10
146	The Monastery, by Sir Walter Scott	20
147	The Abbot, sequel to "The Monastery," by Sir Walter Scott	20
148	Leila, by Geo. W. M. Reynolds	20
149	Karaman, sequel to "Leila," by Geo. W. M. Reynolds	20
150	How He Won Her, by Geraldine Fleming	10
151	The Queen's Book, Victoria R. I.	10
152	John Brown's Legs, by Kenward Philp	20
153	Berlin Society, by Count Paul Vasili	10
154	Beyond Pardon, by Charlotte M. Braeme	20
155	Life's Joys, by Emile Zola	20
156	The Wandering Jew, Part I, by Eugene Sue	20
156	The Wandering Jew, Part II, by Eugene Sue	20
157	Harry Lorrequer, by Charles Lever	20
158	It is Never too Late to Mend, by Charles Reade	20
159	The Mysteries of Paris, Part I, by Eugene Sue	20
159	The Mysteries of Paris, Part II, by Eugene Sue	20
160	Tom Burke, of "Ours," Part I, by Charles Lever	20
160	Tom Burke of "Ours," Part II, by Charles Lever	20
161	Foul Play, by Charles Reade	20
162	Put Yourself in His Place, by Charles Reade	20
163	Leonie, by the Author of "For Mother's Sake"	20
164	Enemies Born, by Laura C. Ford	20
165	Not Like Other Girls, by Rosa Nouchette Carey	20
166	The Midshipman, Marmaduke Merry	20
167	Jack's Courtship, by W. Clark Russell	20
168	An Old Man's Love, by Anthony Trollope	10
169	The Octoroon, by Miss M. E. Braddon	10
170	John Bull and His Island, by Max O'Rell	10
171	"Airy Fairy Lilian," by the "Duchess"	20
172	The Clique of Gold, by Emile Gaboriau	20
173	Beauty's Daughters, by the "Duchess"	20
174	For Her Dear Sake, by Mary Cecil Hay	20
175	Vixen, by Miss M. E. Braddon	20
176	The New Magdalen, by Wilkie Collins	10
177	White Wings: A Yachting Romance, by William Black	20
178	The Arundel Motto, by Mary Cecil Hay	20
179	Barnaby Rudge, by Charles Dickens	20
180	The Sun Maid, by Miss Grant	20
181	Maid, Wife or Widow? by Mrs. Alexander	10
182	Comin' Thro' the Rye, by Helen B. Mathers	20
183	Nancy, by Rhoda Broughton	20
184	Hidden Perils, by Mary Cecil Hay	20
185	A Tale of Two Cities, by Charles Dickens	20
186	The Wooing O't, by Mrs. Alexander	20
187	Which Loved Him Best? by Charlotte M. Braeme	10

MUNRO'S LIBRARY.—Pocket Edition.

NO.		PRICE.
188	A Sailor's Sweetheart, by W. Clark Russell	20
189	Friendship, by "Ouida"	20
190	Griffith Gaunt, by Chas. Reade	20
191	Lord Lynne's Choice, by Charlotte M. Braeme	10
192	Oliver Twist, by Charles Dickens	20
193	Barbara; or, Splendid Misery, by Miss M. E. Braddon	20
194	My First Offer, by Mary Cecil Hay	20
195	Which Shall it Be? by Mrs. Alexander	10
196	Pascarel, by "Ouida"	20
197	The Moonstone, by Wilkie Collins	20
198	The Woman-Hater, by Charles Reade	20
199	A Little Pilgrim, by Mrs. Oliphant	10
200	Signa, by "Ouida"	20
201	Readiana, by Charles Reade	10
202	The Mysteries of Louis Napoleon's Court	20
203	The Way of the World, by David Christie Murray	20
204	Wild Oats, by Henry Greville	20
205	Agnes Sorel, by G. P. R. James	20
206	Claire and the Forge-Master, by Georges Ohnet	20
207	The Man She Cared For, by F. W. Robinson	20
208	Pretty Miss Neville, by B. M. Croker	20
209	Fourteen Years With Adelina Patti	10
210	Sappho, by Alphonse Daudet	10
211	Electra, by Laura C. Ford	20
212	For Honor's Sake, by Laura C. Ford	20
213	Cruel as the Grave, by Genevieve Ulmar	20
214	Hard Times, by Charles Dickens	10
215	Called Back, by Hugh Conway	20
216	Monte-Cristo and His Wife	20
217	The Son of Monte-Cristo, Part I.	20
218	The Son of Monte-Cristo, Part II	20
219	The Countess of Monte-Cristo, Part I	20
220	The Countess of Monte-Cristo, Part II	20
221	The Baby's Grandmother, by L. B. Walford	20
222	A Great Mistake, by the Author of "His Wedded Wife"	20
223	A Fatal Dower, by the Author of "His Wedded Wife"	20
224	Diana's Discipline, by Charlotte M. Braeme	20
225	Prince Charlie's Daughter, by Charlotte M. Braeme	10
226	The House on The Marsh, by F. Warden	20
227	Darnley, by G. P. R. James	20
228	A Sinless Secret, by "Rita"	10
229	A Broken Wedding-Ring, by Charlotte M. Braeme	20
230	The Mystery, by Mrs. Henry Wood	20
231	The Gambler's Wife, by the Author of "The Belle of the Family," etc	20
232	John Bull's Neighbor	10
233	Mr. Smith, by L. B. Walford	20
234	Beyond Recall, by Adeline Sergeant	10
235	The Parisian Detective, by F. Du Boisgobey	20
236	Cousins, by L. B. Walford	20
237	Troublesome Daughters, by L. B. Walford	20
238	Judith Shakespeare, by William Black	20
239	Love and Mirage; or, Waiting on an Island	10
240	Terribly Tempted, by Annabel Gray	10
241	The Squire's Legacy, by Mary Cecil Hay	20
242	Wanda, by "Ouida"	20
243	A Sea-Change, by Flora L. Shaw	20
244	The Sin of a Lifetime, by Charlotte M. Braeme	20
245	At War With Herself, by Charlotte M. Braeme	10
246	John Bull's Misfortunes, by Camile Debans	10
247	Nora's Love Test, by Mary Cecil Hay	20
248	From Out The Gloom, by Charlotte M. Braeme	20
249	Love's Warfare, by Charlotte M. Braeme	20
250	The Queen of Hearts, by Wilkie Collins	20
251	A Story of Three Sisters, by C. Maxwell	20
252	Moonshine and Marguerites, and Monica, by the "Duchess"	10
253	Loys, Lord Berresford, and The Witching Hour, by "Duchess"	10
254	The Knightsbridge Mystery, and The Picture, by Charles Reade	10
255	Sweet is True Love, and That Last Rehearsal, by the "Duchess"	10
256	Beau Tancrede, by Alex. Dumas	20
257	Tom Brown's School Days, by Thomas Hughes	20
258	The Pathfinder, by J. Fenimore Cooper	20
259	Dark Days, by Hugh Conway	20
260	John Bull's Daughters, by Max O'Rell	10
261	The Lover's Creed, by Mrs. Cashel Hoey	20

MUNRO'S LIBRARY.—Pocket Edition.

NO.		PRICE.
262	A Willful Maid, by Charlotte M. Braeme....	20
263	The Mistletoe Bough (Christmas, 1884), edited by Miss M. E. Braddon....	20
264	A Man of the World, by Edmund Yates.....	20
265	Agnes Evelyn, by G. W. M. Reynolds.....	20
266	The Child of Waterloo, by G. W. M. Reynolds	20
267	Robert Macaire, by G. W. M. Reynolds	20
268	Mysteries of the Merry Monarch's Court, Part I, by G. W. M. Reynolds.....	20
269	Mysteries of the Merry Monarch's Court, Part II, by G. W. M. Reynold.....	20
270	The First False Step, by G. W. M. Reynolds.....	20
271	The Slave Woman of England, by G. W. M. Reynolds.....	20
272	Faust and the Demon, Part I, by G. W. M. Reynolds.....	20
273	Faust and the Demon, Part II, by G. W. M. Reynolds.....	20
274	The Degraded Deserter, Part I, by G. W. M. Reynolds.....	20
275	The Degraded Deserter, Part II, by G. W. M. Reynolds.....	20
276	The Necromancer, Part I, by G. W. M. Reynolds.....	20
277	The Necromancer, Part II, by G. W. M. Reynolds	20
278	The Mystery of the Marchmonts, Part I, by G. W. M. Reynolds.....	20
279	The Mystery of the Marchmonts, Part II, by G. W. M. Reynolds.....	20
280	Bertram Vivian, Part I, by G. W. M. Reynolds.....	20
281	Bertram Vivian, Part II, by G. W. M. Reynolds.....	20
282	The Countess of Lascelles, Part I, by G. W. M. Reynolds.....	20
283	The Countess of Lascelles, Part II, by G. W. M. Reynolds.....	20
284	The Doom of the Burker, Part I, by G. W. M. Reynolds.....	20
285	The Doom of the Burker, Part II, by G. W. M. Reynolds.....	20
286	Rose Sommerville, by G. W. M. Reynolds.....	20
287	Tragic Scenes in the Life of a London Physician, by G. W. M. Reynolds.....	20
288	The Young Duchess, by G. W. M. Reynolds.....	20
289	Imogen Hartland, by G. W. M. Reynolds.....	20
290	Ethel Trevor, by G. W. M. Reynolds.....	20
291	Wagner, the Wehr-Wolf, Part I, by G. W. M. Reynolds.....	20
292	Wagner, the Wehr-Wolf, Part II, by G. W. M. Reynolds.....	20
293	The Mysteries of the Court of Queen Elizabeth, by G. W. M. Reynolds	20
294	Ada Arundel, by G. W. M. Reynolds.....	20
295	Olivia, by G. W. M. Reynolds...	20
296	Joseph Wilmot, Part I, by G. W. M. Reynolds.....	20
297	Joseph Wilmot, Part II, by G. W. M. Reynolds.....	20
298	Joseph Wilmot, Part III, by G. W. M. Reynolds	20
299	The Greek Corsair, Part I, by G. W. M. Reynolds.....	20
300	The Greek Corsair, Part II, by G. W. M. Reynolds.....	20
301	The Greek Corsair, Part III, by G. W. M. Reynolds.....	20
302	Sunshine and Gloom. by Geraldine Fleming.....	20
303	A Terrible Crime, by Emma Garrison Jones.....	20
304	Addie's Husband	20
305	Matt: A Tale of a Caravan, by Robert Buchanan.....	10
306	The Deerslayer, by J. Fenimore Cooper	20
307	Daisy Darrell, by Laura C. Ford	20
308	Robert Ord's Atonement, by Rosa Nouchette Carey.....	20
309	In Durance Vile, by the "Duchess"	10
310	Deldee; or, The Iron Hand, by F. Warden.....	20
311	The Last of the Mohicans, by J. Fenimore Cooper.....	20
312	The Pioneers, by J. Fenimore Cooper.....	20
313	The Prairie, by J. Fenimore Cooper.....	20
314	20.000 Leagues under the Seas, by Jules Verne.....	20
315	A Sister's Sacrifice, by Geraldine Fleming.....	20
316	Our Mutual Friend, Part I, by Charles Dickens.....	20
317	Our Mutual Friend, Part II, by Charles Dickens.....	20
318	Bleak House, Part I, by Charles Dickens	20
319	Bleak House, Part II, by Charles Dickens.....	20
320	Martin Chuzzlewit, Part I, by Charles Dickens.....	20
321	Martin Chuzzlewit, Part II, by Charles Dickens.....	20
322	Dombey and Son, Part I, by Charles Dickens.....	20
323	Dombey and Son, Part II, by Charles Dickens.....	20

MUNRO'S LIBRARY.—Pocket Edition.

No.		Price.
324	Great Expectations, by Charles Dickens	20
325	Mrs. Lirriper's Legacy and Lodgings, by Charles Dickens	20
326	Little Dorrit, Part I, by Charles Dickens	20
327	Little Dorrit, Part II, by Charles Dickens	20
328	The Pickwick Papers, Part I, by Charles Dickens	20
329	The Pickwick Papers, Part II, by Charles Dickens	20
330	The Mystery of Edwin Drood, by Charles Dickens	20
331	The Uncommercial Traveler, by Charles Dickens	20
332	Sketches by Boz, by Charles Dickens	20
333	American Notes, by Charles Dickens	20
334	Pictures from Italy and Mudfog Papers, by Charles Dickens	20
335	Life and Memoirs of Gen. U. S. Grant	10
336	A Terrible Secret, by Geraldine Fleming	20
337	The Russians at the Gates of Herat, by C. Marvin	10
338	On the Fo'k'sle Head, by W. Clark Russell; and Trusted and Loved	20
339	Slaves of the Ring, by Geraldine Fleming	20
340	A Lost Son, by Mary Linskill	10
341	Dead Men Tell No Tales, But Live Men Do, by G. A. Sala	20
342	That Terrible Man, by W. E. Norris; and A Fit of the Blues	10
343	Paul and Virginia, by B. de St. Pierre	10
344	Diavola, Part I, by Miss M. E. Braddon	20
345	Diavola, Part II, by Miss M. E. Braddon	20
346	Married in Haste, edited by Miss M. E. Braddon	20
347	Put to the Test, edited by Miss M. E. Braddon	20
348	Joshua Haggard's Daughter, by Miss M. E. Braddon	20
349	Rupert Godwin, by Miss M. E. Braddon	20
350	Only a Clod, by Miss M. E. Braddon	20
351	The Cloven Foot, by Miss M. E. Braddon	20
352	Only a Woman, edited by Miss M. E. Braddon	20
353	The Lady's Mile, by Miss M. E. Braddon	20
354	Mount Royal, by Miss M. E. Braddon	20
355	Mignon, by J. S. Winter, and Society in London	20
356	A Strange World, by Miss M. E. Braddon	20
357	Sir Jasper's Tenant, by Miss. M. E. Braddon	20
358	Strangers and Pilgrims, by Miss M. E. Braddon	20
359	The Doctor's Wife, by Miss M. E. Braddon	20
360	Fenton's Quest, by Miss M. E. Braddon	20
361	The Golden Calf, by Miss M. E. Braddon	20
362	Hostages to Fortune, by Miss M. E. Braddon	20
363	Birds of Prey, by Miss M. E. Braddon	20
364	Charlotte's Inheritance, by Miss M. E. Braddon	20
365	Just As I Am, by Miss M. E. Braddon	20
366	Asphodel, by Miss M. E. Braddon	20
367	Taken at the Flood, by Miss M. E. Braddon	20
368	Dead Men's Shoes, by Miss M. E. Braddon	20
369	John Marchmont's Legacy, by Miss M. E. Braddon	20
370	Lady Castlemaine's Divorce, by Charlotte M. Braeme	20
371	Curley, and My Poor Wife	20
372	Carriston's Gift, by Hugh Conway	10
373	Dick's Sweetheart, by the "Duchess"	20
374	A Second Life, by Mrs. Alexander	20
375	A Family Affair, by Hugh Conway	20
376	Dorris, by the "Duchess"	20
377	Mrs. Geoffrey, by the "Duchess"	20
378	Faith and Unfaith, by the "Duchess"	20
379	Rossmoyne, by the "Duchess"	20
380	Mildred Trevanion, by the "Duchess"	10
381	A Week in Killarney, by the "Duchess"	10
382	A Maiden All Forlorn, by the "Duchess"	20
383	Thrown on the World, by Charlotte M. Braeme	20
384	The Earl's Atonement, by Charlotte M. Braeme	20
385	Under a Shadow, by Charlotte M. Braeme	20
386	The Shadow of the Sword, by Robert Buchanan	20
387	God and the Man, by Robert Buchanan	20
388	The Martyrdom of Madeline, by Robert Buchanan	20
389	Annan Water, by Robert Buchanan	20

MUNRO'S LIBRARY.—Pocket Edition.

NO.		PRICE.
390	Love Me Forever, by Robert Buchanan	10
391	A Treacherous Woman, by Mrs. H. C. Hoffman	20
392	Married by the Mayor, by Mrs. H. C. Hoffman	20
393	A Harvest of Thorns, by Mrs. H. C. Hoffman	20
394	Laughing Eyes, by Mrs. H. C. Hoffman	20
395	Married at Midnight, by Mrs. H. C. Hoffman	20
396	Lost to the World, by Mrs. H. C. Hoffman	20
397	Love Conquers Pride, by Mrs. H. C. Hoffman	20
398	A Miserable Woman, by Mrs. H. C. Hoffman	20
399	A Sister's Vengeance, by Mrs. H. C. Hoffman	20
400	Mary Anderson, by J. M. Farrar, M. A	10
401	A Girl Hero, by Mary Grace Halpine	20
402	A Letter, by Mary Grace Halpine	20
403	Discarded, by Mary Grace Halpine	20
404	A Strange Betrothal, by Mary Grace Halpine	20
405	His Brother's Widow, by Mary Grace Halpine	20
406	A Wife's Crime, by Mary Grace Halpine	20
407	The Young School-teacher, by Mary Grace Halpine	20
408	A Great Divorce Case, by Mary Grace Halpine	20
409	A Strange Disappearance, by Mary Grace Halpine	20
410	The Divorced Wife, by Mary Grace Halpine	20
411	Blind Elsie's Crime, by Mary Grace Halpine	20
412	Wronged, by Mary Grace Halpine	20
413	A Prince of Darkness, by F. Warden	20
414	O'Driscoll of Dara, by Dennis O'Sullivan	20
415	Famed Fontenoy, by Dennis O'Sullivan	20
416	A Strange Case, by Dennis O'Sullivan	20
417	Mary Mavourneen, by Dennis O'Sullivan	20
418	The Lion of Limerick, by Dennis O'Sullivan	20
419	The Beauty of Benburb, by Dennis O'Sullivan	20
420	The Maid of Cremona, by Dennis O'Sullivan	20
421	Eviction, by Dennis O'Sullivan	20
422	At Bay, by Mrs. Alexander	20
423	Her Martyrdom, by Charlotte M. Braeme	20
424	Scottish Chiefs, Part I, by Jane Porter	20
425	Scottish Chiefs, Part II, by Jane Porter	20
426	A Mother's Mistake, by Adah M. Howard	20
427	A Haunted Life, by Adah M. Howard	20
428	A Desperate Woman, by Adah M. Howard	20
429	Little Nana, by Adah M. Howard	20
430	By Mutual Consent, by Adah M. Howard	20
431	The Luck of the Darrells, by James Payn	20
432	The Courting of Mary Smith, by F. W. Robinson	20
433	Slings and Arrows, by Hugh Conway	10
434	All in One, by Hugh Conway	20
435	Lorna Doone, Part I, by R. D. Blackmore	20
436	Lorna Doone, Part II, by R. D. Blackmore	20
437	Remarkable History of Sir Thos. Upmore, by R. D. Blackmore	20
438	Erema; or, My Father's Sin, by R. D. Blackmore	20
439	Cradock Nowell, Part I, by R. D. Blackmore	20
440	Cradock Nowell, Part II, by R. D. Blackmore	20
441	Cristowell, by R. D. Blackmore	20
442	Clara Vaughan, by R. D. Blackmore	20
443	The Maid of Sker, by R. D. Blackmore	20
444	Mary Anerley, by R. D. Blackmore	20
445	Alice Lorraine, by R. D. Blackmore	20
446	Cripps, the Carrier, by R. D. Blackmore	20
447	Irene, by Annie A. Gibbs	20
448	The Waif of the Storm, by Annie A. Gibbs	20
449	The Forced Marriage, by Annie A. Gibbs	20
450	A Blighted Life, by Annie A. Gibbs	20
451	A Cruel Woman, by Annie A. Gibbs	20
452	Her Father's Sin, by Annie A. Gibbs	20
453	A Dead Man's Face, by Hugh Conway	10
454	The Dark House, by G. Manville Fenn	10
455	Leah's Mistake, by Mrs. H. C. Hoffman	20
456	A Tom Boy, by Mrs H. C. Hoffman	20

MUNRO'S LIBRARY.—Pocket Edition.

No.		Price.
457	Broken Vows, by Mrs. H. C. Hoffman	20
458	The Sacred Nugget, by B. L. Farjeon	20
459	White Heather, by William Black	20
460	The Phœnix, by Milton Nobles.	20
461	Tangles Unraveled, by Evelyn K. Johnson	20
462	Handy Andy, by Samuel Lover.	20
463	Rory O'More, by Samuel Lover.	20
464	In the 25th Dragoons, by J. S. Winter	10
465	The Rabbi's Spell, by Stuart C. Cumberland	10
466	For Lilias, by Rosa Nouchette Carey	20
467	The Mistletoe Bough (Christmas, 1885), edited by Miss M. E. Braddon	20
468	Britta, by George Temple	10
469	Goblin Gold, by May Crommelin	10
470	The Master of the Mine, by Robert Buchanan	20
471	Othmar, by "Ouida"	20
472	Great Britain through American Spectacles, by Rev. T. DeWitt Talmage	20
473	The Canon's Ward, by James Payn	20
474	A Barren Title, by T. W. Speight	10
475	Belinda, by Rhoda Broughton..	20
476	In Maremma, by "Ouida"	20
477	"Self or Bearer," by Walter Besant	10
478	Story of a Sin, by Helen B. Mathers	20
479	Grif, by B. L. Farjeon	20
480	Dorothy's Venture, by Mary Cecil Hay	20
481	History of a Week, by Mrs. L. B. Walford	10
482	Far from the Madding Crowd, by Thomas Hardy	20
483	Wife in Name Only, by Charlotte M. Braeme	20
484	Repented at Leisure, by Charlotte M. Braeme	20
485	Hilda, by Charlotte M. Braeme.	20
486	A Golden Heart, by Charlotte M Braeme	10
487	A Bitter Atonement, by Charlotte M Braeme	20
488	Between Two Loves, by Charlotte M. Braeme	20
489	Evelyn's Folly, by Charlotte M. Braeme	20
490	A Woman's Temptation, by Charlotte M. Braeme	20
491	A Struggle for a Ring by Charlotte M. Braeme	20
492	Lady Damer's Secret, by Charlotte M. Braeme	20
493	A Fair Mystery, by Charlotte M. Braeme	20
494	Romance of a Young Girl, by Charlotte M. Braeme	20
495	'Twixt Love and Duty, by Tighe Hopkins	20
496	Rainbow Gold, by David Christie Murray	20
497	First Person Singular, by David Christie Murray	20
498	Hearts, by David Christie Murray	20
499	A Life's Atonement, by David Christie Murray	20
500	Val Strange, by David Christie Murray	20
501	Woman Against Woman, by Mrs. M. A. Holmes	20
502	Eileen Alanna, by Dennis O'Sullivan	20
503	The Mikado, and Other Operas, by W. S. Gilbert	20
504	Robert Emmet, by Dennis O'Sullivan	20
505	The Greatest Heiress in England, by Mrs. Oliphant	20
506	Victor and Vanquished, by Mary Cecil Hay	20
507	Cherry Ripe, by Helen B. Mathers	20
508	A Country Gentleman, by Mrs. Oliphant	20
509	Unfairly Won, by Nannie P. O'Donohue	20
510	Dolores, by Mrs. Forrester	20
511	I Have Lived and Loved, by Mrs. Forrester	20
512	My Lord and My Lady, by Mrs. Forrester	20
513	My Hero, by Mrs. Forrester	20
514	Fair Women, by Mrs. Forrester	20
515	Mignon, by Mrs. Forrester	20
516	Viva, by Mrs. Forrester	20
517	Diana Carew, by Mrs. Forrester	20
518	Rhona, by Mrs. Forrester	20
519	Roy and Viva, by Mrs. Forrester	20
520	From Olympus to Hades, by Mrs. Forrester	20
521	June, a Love Story, by Mrs. Forrester	20
522	Omnia Vanitas, a Tale of Society, by Mrs. Forrester	10
523	A Young Man's Fancy, and Other Tales, by Mrs. Forrester	20
524	A House Divided Against Itself, by Mrs. Oliphant	20
525	A Cardinal Sin, by Hugh Conway	20
526	Aunt Parker, by B. L Farjeon.	20
527	Locked Out, by Hart Bernard..	10
528	The Last of the Macallisters, by Amelia E. Barr	10
529	Until the Day Breaks, by Emily Spender	20
530	Cavalry Life, by J. S. Winter...	20

MUNRO'S LIBRARY.—Pocket Edition.

NO.		PRICE.
531	Aunt Rachel, by David Christie Murray	10
532	Good-bye, Sweetheart, by Rhoda Broughton	20
533	Red as a Rose is She, by Rhoda Broughton	20
534	Cometh up as a Flower, by Rhoda Broughton	20
535	Not Wisely But Too Well, by Rhoda Broughton	20
536	Joan, by Rhoda Broughton	20
537	Second Thoughts, by Rhoda Broughton	20
538	Lady Branksmere, by the "Duchess"	20
539	Griselda	20
540	Lord Vanecourt's Daughter, by Mabel Collins	20
541	Lothair, by Disraeli (Earl of Beaconsfield)	20
542	The Young Duke, by Disraeli	20
543	Tancred; or, The New Crusade, by Disraeli	20
544	Miriam Alroy, by Disraeli	20
545	Henrietta Temple, by Disraeli	20
546	Coningsby, by Disraeli	20
547	Sybil, by Disraeli	20
548	Venetia, by Disraeli	20
549	Endymion, by Disraeli	20
550	Contarini Fleming, by Disraeli	20
551	Vivian Gray, Part I, by Disraeli	20
552	Vivian Gray, Part II, by Disraeli	20
553	The Rose of Iskander and Other Tales, by Disraeli	20
554	Lord Beaconsfield's Life and Correspondence, by Disraeli.	10
555	A Mental Struggle, by the "Duchess"	20
556	The Mark of Cain, by Andrew Lang	10
557	The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, by Robert L. Stevenson	10
558	Prince Otto, by Robert L. Stevenson	10
559	Sam's Sweetheart, by Helen B. Mathers	20
560	My Lady Green Sleeves, by Helen B. Mathers	20
561	The Evil Genius, by Wilkie Collins	20
562	The Haunted Chamber, by the "Duchess"	10
563	Miss Carew, by Amelia B. Edwards	20
564	My Brother's wife, by Amelia B. Edwards	20
565	Hand and Glove, by Amelia B. Edwards	20
566	Witness My Hand, by the author of "Lady Gwendolen's Tryst"	10
567	Beaton's Bargain	20
568	Look Before You Leap, by Mrs. Alexander	20
569	A Pair of Blue Eyes, by Thomas Hardy	20
570	The Mayor of Casterbridge, by Thomas Hardy	20
571	Living or Dead, by Hugh Conway	20
572	If Love Be Love, by D. Cecil Gibbs	20
573	A Stern Chase, by Mrs. Cashel Hoey	20
574	"King" Arthur, by Hannah Mulock	10
575	The Heritage of Langdale, by Mrs. Alexander	20
576	The Secret of Her Life, by Edward Jenkins	20
577	Ralph Wilton's Weird, by Mrs. Alexander	10
578	Marjorie; or, Wild as a Hawk, by Katharine S. Macquoid	20
579	The Head Station, by Mrs. Campbell-Praed	20
580	A Diamond in the Rough, by Alice O'Hanlon	20
581	Army Society, by J. S. Winter	10
582	In the Old Palazzo, by Gertrude Forde	20
583	One of the Family, by James Payn	20
584	A Fair Maid, by F. W. Robinson	20
585	Pretty Miss Bellew, by Theo. Gift	20
586	Fleurange, by Mme. Augustus Craven	20
587	The Trumpet Major, by Thomas Hardy	20
588	A Fallen Idol, by F. Anstey	20
589	Doris' Fortune, by Florence Warden	10
590	The Heir of the Ages, by James Payn	20
591	Peeress and Player, by Florence Marryat	20
592	Entrapped, by Geraldine Fleming	20
593	Buried Diamonds, by Sarah Tytler	20
594	Cynic Fortune, by David Christie Murray	10
595	The Dynamiter, by Robert L. Stephenson	20
596	By the Gate of the Sea, by David Christie Murray	10
597	Effie Ogilvie, by Mrs. Oliphant.	20
598	Amoret, by Charles Gibbon	20
599	The Crack of Doom, by William Minto	20
600	Jet; Her Face or Her Fortune, by Mrs. Annie Edwards	10
601	A Ballroom Repentance, by Mrs. Annie Edwards	20
602	A Point of Honor, by Mrs. Annie Edwards	20
603	Ought We to Visit Her, by Mrs. Annie Edwards	20

MUNRO'S LIBRARY.—Pocket Edition.

No.		Price.
604	Leah; A Woman of Fashion, by Mrs. Annie Edwards	20
605	Archie Lovel, by Mrs. Annie Edwards	20
606	A Blue Stocking, by Mrs. Annie Edwards	10
607	Susan Fielding, by Mrs. Annie Edwards	20
608	A Vagabond Heroine, by Mrs. Annie Edwards	10
609	Philip Earnscliffe, by Mrs. Annie Edwards	20
610	Vivian, the Beauty, by Mrs. Annie Edwards	10
611	Steven Lawrence, by Mrs. Annie Edwards	20
612	Like Lucifer, by Denzil Vane	20
613	Kidnapped, by Robert Louis Stevenson	20
614	Bound by a Spell, by Hugh Conway	10
615	A Daughter of the Gods, by Jane Stanley	20
616	Keep My Secret, by G. M. Robins	20
617	Barbara, by the author of "His Wedded Wife"	20
618	Bad to Beat, by Hawley Smart.	10
619	My Friend Jim, by W. E. Norris	10
620	A Playwright's Daughter, by Mrs. Annie Edwards	10
621	A Girton Girl, by Mrs. Annie Edwards	20
622	Our Radicals, by Fred Burnaby	20
623	The Prettiest Woman in Warsaw, by Mabel Collins	20
624	New Arabian Nights, by Robert L. Stevenson	20
625	A Wicked Girl, by Mary Cecil Hay	10
626	Found Out, by Helen B. Mathers	10
627	An Ill-Regulated Mind, by Katharine Wylde	10
628	Delicia, by Beatrice May Butt	20
629	Her Lord and Master, by Florence Marryat	20
630	My Sister the Actress, by Florence Marryat	20
631	"My Own Child," by Florence Marryat	20
632	"No Intentions," by Florence Marryat	20
633	Written in Fire, by Florence Marryat	20
634	Captain Norton's Diary, by Florence Marryat	10
635	The Girls of Feversham, by Florence Marryat	20
636	The Root of All Evil, by Florence Marryat	20
637	Out of His Reckoning, by Florence Marryat	10
638	Facing the Footlights, by Florence Marryat	20
639	Petronel, by Florence Marryat.	20
640	A Star and a Heart, by Florence Marryat	10
641	Ange, by Florence Marryat	20
642	A Harvest of Wild Oats, by Florence Marryat	20
643	A Little Stepson, by Florence Marryat	10
644	Phyllida, by Florence Marryat	20
645	With Cupid's Eyes, by Florence Marryat	20
646	The Poison of Asps, by Florence Marryat	10
647	The Fair-haired Alda, by Florence Marryat.	20
648	A Lucky Disappointment, by Florence Marryat	10
649	The Heir Presumptive, by Florence Marryat	20
650	Under the Lilies and Roses, by Florence Marryat	20
651	The Heart of Jane Warner, by Florence Marryat	20
652	Love's Conflict, Part I., by Florence Marryat	20
653	Love's Conflict, Part II., by Florence Marryat	20
654	The Wife's Sacrifice, by Adolphe D'Ennery	10
655	Little Sunshine, by Adah M. Howard	20
656	A Phantom Lover, by Vernon Lee	20
657	Baptized with a Curse, by Edith Stewart Drewry	20
658	Divorce, by the author of "Led Astray"	20
659	A True Magdalen, by Charlotte M. Braeme	20
660	King Solomon's Mines, by H. Rider Haggard	20
661	Lady Valworth's Diamonds, by the "Duchess"	10
662	Little Tu'penny, by S. Baring Gould	20
663	A House Party, by "Ouida"	10
664	Mohawks, by Miss M. E. Braddon	20
665	Treasure Island, by Robert L. Stevenson	10
666	Once Again, by Mrs. Forrester.	20
667	A Woman's Error, by Charlotte M. Braeme	20
668	A Voyage to the Cape, by W. Clark Russell	20
669	An Only Daughter, by Hazel Wood	20
670	On The Quicksands, by Hazel Wood	20
671	A Terrible Tangle, by Hazel Wood	20
672	Her Son's Wife, by Hazel Wood	20
673	Two Wives, by Hazel Wood	20
674	The Tramp's Daughter, by Hazel Wood	20

MUNRO'S LIBRARY.—Pocket Edition.

NO.		PRICE.
675	Were They Married? by Hazel Wood	20
676	Poor Nell, by Hazel Wood	20
677	Little Bessie, by Hazel Wood	20
678	Faust; a Weird Story, by Alfred R. Philips	10
679	Doctor Cupid, by Rhoda Broughton	20
680	The Guilty River, by Wilkie Collins	10
681	The Holy Rose, by Walter Besant	10
682	A Willful Young Woman, by the author of "Who is Sylvia?"	20
683	Golden Bells, by R. E. Francillon	10
684	Joan Wentworth, by Katherine S. Macquoid	20
685	By Woman's Wit, by Mrs. Alexander	20
686	The World Went Very Well Then, by Walter Besant	20
687	The Nine of Hearts, by B. L. Farjeon	20
688	For Maimie's Sake, by Grant Allen	20
689	Love and Life, by Charlotte M. Yonge	20
690	Chantry House, by Charlotte M. Yonge	20
691	The Dove in the Eagle's Nest, by Charlotte M. Yonge	20
692	The Two Sides of the Shield, by Charlotte M. Yonge	20
693	My Young Alcides, by Charlotte M. Yonge	20
694	John Maidment, by J. Sturgis	20
695	Ione Stewart, by Mrs. E. Lynn Linton	20
696	Dorothy Forster, by Walter Besant	20
697	John; a Love Story, by Mrs. Oliphant	20
698	Margaret Maitland, by Mrs. Oliphant	20
699	The Witch's Head, by H. Rider Haggard	20
700	She, by H. Rider Haggard	20
701	For Another's Sin, by Charlotte M. Braeme	20
702	One Thing Needful, by Miss M. E. Braddon	20
703	The Master Passion, by Florence Marryat	20
704	A Modern Telemachus, by Charlotte M. Yonge	20
705	Les Miserables, Part I., by Victor Hugo	20
706	Les Miserables, Part II., by Victor Hugo	20
707	Les Miserables, Part III., by Victor Hugo	20
708	The Rival Cousins, by Col. Prentiss Ingraham	20
709	Claribel's Love Story, by C. M. Braeme	20
710	A Poor Gentleman, by Mrs. Oliphant	20
711	Pure Gold, by Mrs. H. Lovett Cameron	20
712	Karma, by A. P. Sinnett	20
713	A Woman's War, by Charlotte M. Braeme	20
714	Hilary's Folly, by Charlotte M. Braeme	20
715	A Haunted Life, by Charlotte M. Braeme	20
716	Jess, by H. Rider Haggard	20
717	Why Not? by Florence Marryat	20
718	The Merry Men, and other tales, by Robert L. Stevenson	20
719	In One Town, by E. Downey	20
720	Elizabeth's Fortune, by Miss Bertha Thomas	20
721	"He," a companion to "She"	20
722	Springhaven, by R. Blackmore	20
723	Wooed and Married, by Rosa Nouchette Carey	20
724	"Dawn," by H. Rider Haggard, *Complete*	20
725	The Woodlanders, by Thomas Hardy	20
726	"It," the most popular book of the age	20
727	Wee Wifie, by Rosa Nouchette Carey	20
728	Her World Against A Lie, by Florence Marryat	20
729	The Dead Secret, by Wilkie Collins	20
730	Sabina Zembra, by W. Black	20
731	Knight-Errant, by Edna Lyall	20
732	Her Johnnie, by Violet Whyte	20
733	"Pa," by the author of "He," "It," etc	20
734	"Ma," by the Author of "He," "It," etc	20
735	A Golden Hope, by W. Clark Russell	20
736	King Solomon's Wives, by the Author of "He," "It," etc	20
737	King Solomon's Treasures, by Author of "He," "It," etc	20
738	Allan Quatermain, by H. Rider Haggard	20
739	"Bess," a companion to "Jess"	20
740	'Twixt Smile and Tear, by C. M. Braeme	20
741	Oni, by Wenona Gilman	20
742	Sweet Cymbeline, by Charlotte M. Braeme	20
743	Open Sesame, by Florence Marryat	20
744	Mad Dumaresq, by Florence Marryat	20
745	Marjorie's Fate, by Charlotte M. Braeme	20
746	Lady Diana's Pride, by Charlotte M. Braeme	20

MUNRO'S LIBRARY.—Pocket Edition.

NO.		PRICE.
747	The Belle of Lynn, by Charlotte M. Braeme	20
748	Fighting the Air, by Florence Marryat	20
749	Marrying and Giving in Marriage, and "Us," by Mrs. Molesworth	20
750	This Man's Wife, by George Manville Fenn	20
751	Next of Kin—Wanted, by Miss Betham-Edwards	20
752	A Near Relation, by Christabel R. Coleridge	20
753	A Daughter of the People, by G. M. Craik	20
754	Redeemed by Love, by Charlotte M. Braeme	20
755	The Mystery of Colde Fell by C. M. Braeme	20
756	Golden Gates, by Charlotte M. Braeme	20
757	His Wife's Judgment, by Charlotte M. Braeme	20
758	Amor Vincit, by Mrs. Herbert Martin	20
759	A Choice of Chance, by William Dodson	20
760	The Squire's Darling, and Her Second Love, by Charlotte M. Braeme	20
761	Puck, Part I, by "Ouida"	20
762	Puck, Part II, by "Ouida"	20
763	Tricotrin, Part I, by "Ouida"	20
764	Tricotrin, Part II, by "Ouida"	20
765	Princess Napraxine, by "Ouida"	20
766	As in a Looking Glass by F. C. Philips	20
767	A Dateless Bargain, by C. L. Pirkis	20
768	Aunt Hepsy's Foundling, by Mrs. Leith Adams	20
769	A Terrible Legacy, by Appleton	20

The foregoing works are inclosed in beautiful lithograph covers, and are for sale by all newsdealers, or will be sent to any address, postage free, on receipt of price, by the publisher. Address

MUNRO'S PUBLISHING HOUSE,

P. O. Box 3643. 24 and 26 Vandewater Street, N. Y.

[When ordering by mail, please order by numbers.]

THE CELEBRATED

SOHMER

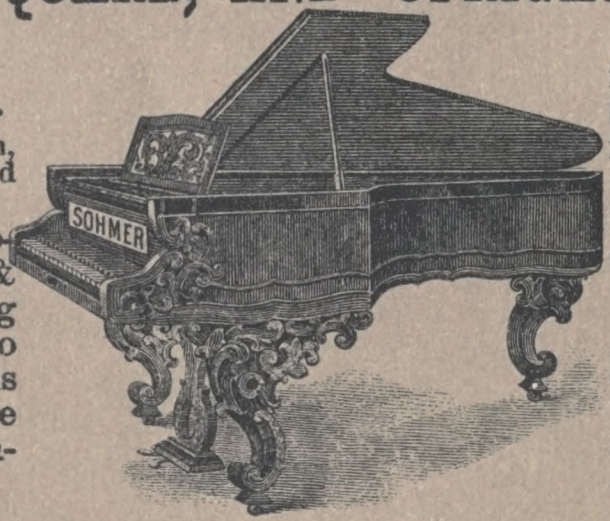
GRAND, SQUARE, AND UPRIGHT PIANOS.

FITST PRIZE

DIPLOMA.

Centennial Exhibition, 1876, Montreal, 1881 and 1882.

The enviable position Sohmer & Co. hold among American Piano Manufacturers is solely due to the merits of their instruments.



They are used in Conservatories, Schools and Seminaries, on account of their superior tone and unequaled durability.

The SOHMER Piano is a special favorite with the leading musicians and critics.

ARE AT PRESENT THE MOST POPULAR

AND PREFERRED BY THE LEADING ARTISTS.

SOHMER & CO., Manufacturers, Nos. 149 to 155 E. 14th St., N. Y.

ABANDON PHYSIC!

Dr. A. W. THOMPSON, Northampton, Mass, says: "I have tested the Gluten Suppositories, and consider them valuable, as indeed I expected from the excellence of their theory."

DR. WM. TODD HELMUTH declares the Gluten Suppositories to be "the best remedy for constipation which I have ever prescribed."

As Sancho Panza said of sleep, so say I of your Gluten Suppositories: "God bless the man who invented them!"—E. L. RIPLEY, Burlington, Vt.

"I prescribe the Gluten Suppositories almost daily in my practice, and am often astonished at the permanent results obtained."—J. MONTFORT SCHLEY, M. D., Professor Physical Diagnosis Woman's Medical College, New York City.

50 Cents by Mail. **Sold by Druggists.**

All Our Health Food Circulars Free.

HEALTH FOOD CO.,

76 Fourth Avenue, **New York.**

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
00022975560